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Violence on the open
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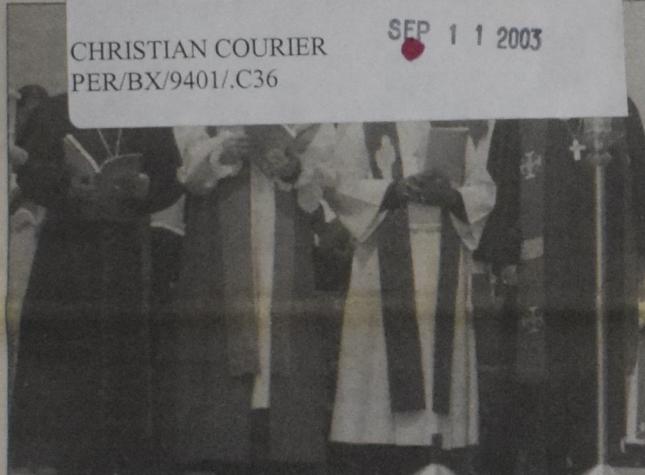
David and Jonathan: a Judeo-
Christian appreciation ... p.10



58th year of publication

Lutheran World Federation meets in Winnipeg

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Cardinal Walter Kasper, Canada's Anglican primate Michael Peers, LWF General Secretary Ishmael Noko, LWF President Christian Krause.

SEP 11 2003

Angela Reitsma

Lutherans from around the world gathered in Winnipeg last month for their General Assembly, a meeting which takes place every six years. It was preceded by a Youth Conference in Guelph, the first time that either of these events have been held in Canada. The theme of this year's Assembly was "For the Healing of the World," an appropriate title, as the emphasis of nearly every discussion was global or ecumenical in nature.

The council introduced, in good Reformed style, a three-point vision for the future: diversity, discernment, and *diakonia*. It defined the latter as "unconditional ministry to one's

neighbor," although it originally meant, in the Greek, simply "to serve," usually food. Jesus elaborated upon the verb in Matthew 25, where *diakonia* grew to include extending shelter to the homeless and visiting the sick and those in prison. Eventually, the meaning was two-fold: serving the Gospel along with sustenance, or, as we simplify it today, to be a deacon (from the Theological Dictionary of the NT). The Lutheran assembly's agenda sought to encourage interdenominational dialogue, international peace, and social justice – a return to the spirit of *diakonia*.

There are 65 million Lutherans worldwide, and church leaders from every part of the globe flew

to Winnipeg for the Assembly. Over 800 people attended, but that number would have been higher if it weren't for restrictions placed by the Canadian government. Entry visas were denied to 51 would-be participants, all from developing nations, for reasons that were not explained to the public.

Gary Doer, the premier of Manitoba, was shocked and embarrassed by the situation, but unable to help the delegates into Canada. The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Canada, host to the event, lamented the "insensitivity and inaction" of the federal government. The council also stated that "this situation reflects one of the most deplorable aspects

see Lutheran Assembly p. 3

Is Haiti facing a voodoo-Christian showdown?

David Miller

MIAMI (Compass) — In late April, Haiti's President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, a former Catholic priest, declared voodoo an officially recognized religion. The decision means, among other things, that marriage ceremonies conducted by voodoo priests now have equal standing with Catholic ones.

According to a BBC report, many people in the country welcome the move. Voodoo, an African folk religion that venerates a mixture of gods and goddesses and Catholic saints, is an integral part of Haitian life, practiced in Haiti since the late 18th century. A common maxim asserts that Haitians are 70 percent Catholic, 30 percent Protestant and 100 percent voodoo.

"We've always been the

majority religion in Haiti – it's never been illegal to be a voodooist," Mambu Racine Sumbu, an American voodoo priestess who has been practicing in Haiti for 15 years, told the BBC April 30. "What President Aristide has done for us, for which we are very thankful, is to facilitate us in obtaining the status that we need to perform legally-binding religious ceremonies."

But some Haitians – particularly evangelical Christians – believe official recognition of voodoo threatens their freedom of worship and even their personal safety. They say a showdown between voodoo and Christianity is imminent.

The government said they are going to turn the country entirely to voodoo. The Christians say we are going to turn the country totally

to the Lord Jesus Christ," Jean Berthony Paul, founder of Mission Evangelique du Nord D'Haiti, told Compass.

"I ask everyone I meet to read the 18th chapter of I Kings to see what happened between the prophet Elijah and the Baal prophets. The same thing will happen here."

Evangelical leaders arrested

Paul has worked in Cap-Haitien, the self-proclaimed "voodoo capital of the world," since 1970, developing churches, schools, a medical clinic and media ministries. In August 1998, a showdown with voodoo leaders over an annual open-air evangelistic crusade landed Paul and two associates in jail.

see Haitian voodoo p. 2



A voodoo ceremony in Haiti. People sing and dance around chalk drawings.

News

Haiti: Boukman, Aristide, voodoo & the church

Elizabeth Kendal

Over the past decade there has been a marked rise in the use of religious nationalism as a political tool. Religious nationalism embodies a rejection of colonialism and the present trend towards the globalisation of culture (global Westernisation). So it is not uncommon these days for a political party or individual aiming to take power or struggling to hold on to power, to use religious nationalism to gain popular support and drag the vote of the majority religion.

This has been the case with Hindu nationalism in India and Buddhist nationalism in Sri Lanka. It was inevitable that eventually African Traditional Religions such as voodoo would be promoted politically in the same way. In this regard, Haiti is most certainly the nation to watch.

Boukman and other relevant history

As with all nationalism, some knowledge of history is crucial for understanding the present situation. "Hayti" (or mountainous land, as it was known by the original inhabitants, the Arawak Indians), was discovered by Christopher Columbus and named "Hispaniola" (Little Spain) in 1492. The Spanish colonized the island and under their rule the Arawak Indians were virtually annihilated. In 1697 the western portion of the island was ceded to France and named Haiti. (The eastern portion under Spanish rule became Saint Domingue, now Dominican Republic.)

Haiti flourished under French rule and became invaluable as a resource for cocoa, cotton, sugar cane and coffee. By 1780, Haiti was one of the wealthiest regions in the world. The plantation system was however built upon the backs of vast numbers of slaves imported from West Africa.

Several consequences of this era provide the foundations for the present situation.

First - the West African slaves brought with them the religious practices of voodoo.

Secondly - the French colonial masters treated the slaves with such undue harshness they created hatred amid an already resentful environment.

Thirdly - a class of "mulattos" (light skinned, sophisticated, Catholic, French-speaking

Haitians) arose from the relations of the slave owners and the slaves. They were at odds with the dark-skinned, voodoo-practicing, Creole-speaking masses.

On August 14, 1791, a black slave and witch doctor named Boukman led the slaves in a voodoo ritual. They sacrificed a pig and drank its blood to form a pact with the devil, whereby they agreed to serve the spirits of the island for 200 years in exchange for freedom from the French. The slave rebellion began August 22, 1791, and after 13 years of

conflict the slaves won their independence. On January 1, 1804 they declared Haiti the world's first independent black republic. An iron statue of a pig stands in Port-au-Prince to commemorate the "Boukman Contract."

Since independence, Haiti has been in a continual state of political struggle and wracked with poverty.

President Aristide, voodoo & the church

Haiti's current president, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, is a former Catholic priest who gained notoriety with the Catholic Church and popularity in Haiti in the late 1980s with his liberation theology.

Haiti voodoo

...continued from page 1

When local officials learned of plans for the annual meeting, they ordered organizers to cancel the event.

"They said, 'Last year you made your crusade, you cast away all our spirits. This year, if you do the crusade, we will kill you,'" Paul recounted.

The evangelicals went ahead with the crusade and officials arrested Paul and two other pastors, Jeane Joel and Gregory Joseph.

"They thought they were going to put us in jail for life."

Not all Christian ministers in Haiti believe Aristide's presi-

dential backing of voodoo will raise tensions between adherents of the African folk religion and evangelical Christians.

Religion not a battle

"I don't really see much change happening because of it," said a North American missionary who has worked in Port-au-Prince for the past 17 years. "Since 1986, we've heard over and over again the terrible thing that's going to happen to the evangelical church because such-and-such is a leader and he doesn't want the evangelical church to come out ahead. I haven't ever seen that happen."

"I don't see religion as a battle,"

actively working to bring people out of it and to help them find reconciliation with God and peace and strength through the Holy Spirit.

Christian Aid's *Mission Insider* recently reported, "While some witch doctors want to renew the 200-year commitment to Voodoo, Christians are spear-heading a year-long prayer movement to 'take Haiti back from Satan', according to the HAVIDEC website. HAVIDEC (from the Creole for Haiti Vision for the Third Century) is 'a concerted effort of all the major churches, denominations, and Protestant organizations in Haiti to bring about a spiritual deliverance for Haiti on the occasion of the

he added. "I think we need to win hearts, one at a time, and disciple. In fact, the evangelical church has been growing through this."

All Christian ministers agree on that last point. Evangelicals currently account for 40 to 45 percent of the Haitian population, according to church spokesmen. They believe the evangelical church in Haiti will continue to grow at a rapid pace, official voodoo notwithstanding.

celebration of our country's 200 years of independence (January 1, 2004)."

Alarm bells

Several analysts have already surmised that Aristide's official recognition of voodoo is a political move to shore up popular support before the elections.

Los Angeles Times reporter Carol J. Williams found evidence to support that theory when she interviewed people in Haiti recently.

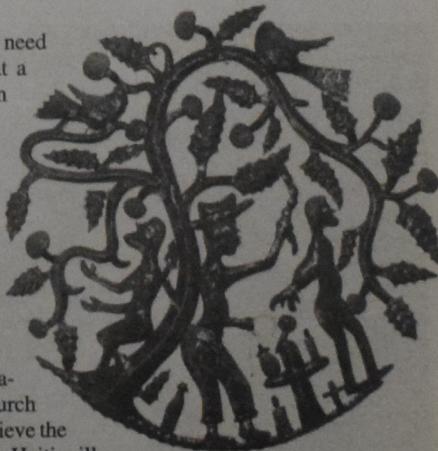
Williams says, "Legitimizing voodoo has strengthened Aristide's image as a man of the people and probably has enhanced popular support for the rumored bid by the former Roman Catholic priest to amend the constitution so he can seek a now-prohibited third term as president.

"By bestowing legitimacy on the African-origin religion, Aristide, the beleaguered president of this poorest of Western countries, has signaled to his people that they should be proud of their African heritage, not forced to subvert it under the religious practices of the European Christians who once repressed them."

There is concern that the promotion of voodoo as "an essential part of national identity", could signal danger for evangelical Christians. Williams quotes one Haitian as saying, "Voodoo has done everything for Haiti. It gave us our independence, while the imported religions held us by the throat."



Neighborhood in Port-au-Prince, Haiti



Voodoo symbol "Zombies under Tree of Life" mixes voodoo with Christianity.

Politics

Lutheran Assembly

...cont. from p. 1

of globalization . . . where money can flow freely between countries but people cannot." Demonstrators marched in silent protest to the Federal Immigration Office, and draped scarves over fifty-one chairs during the opening ceremony to remember the absent members. It was in these unfortunate but illustrative circumstances that the Assembly, with representatives from 75 remaining countries, began the discussion on globalization.

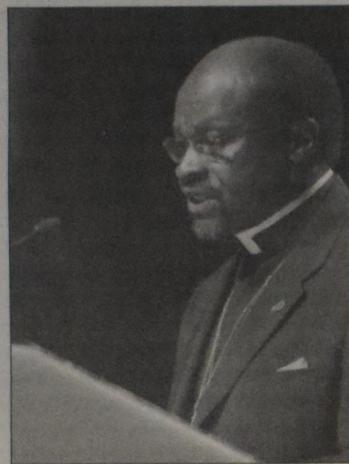
Ecumenism, peace and social justice

Three themes repeated themselves during the ten-day convention, taking turns to dominate the melody but always staying in tune. The first of these was ecumenism, or encouraging unity beyond the denominational divisions within Christianity. The Lutherans were ecumenical in not only word but deed: their opening worship service was held in Winnipeg's Roman Catholic St. Boniface Cathedral, and it was attended by Seventh-Day Adventists, Mennonite Brethren, and Ukrainian Orthodox, just to name a few.

Cardinal Walter Kasper, a representative from the Vatican and the President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, stated that "spiritual ecumenism is the answer to healing the wounds of the world." In 1999, the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) signed a declaration with the Vatican which said they would try and overcome the differences that have historically divided Lutherans and the Papacy. Rev. Mark S. Hanson,

the newly elected president of the LWF, plans to collaborate with Roman Catholics on the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, in 2017.

The outgoing president, Dr. Christian Klause, also mentioned inter-denominational relations.



LWF Secretary Rev. Dr. Ishmael Noko.

He stressed that the future of Christianity will depend on "whether it is possible to gather together the historical, confessional churches and charismatic congregations and movements." Krause also warned of polarization within denominations, citing the recent war in Iraq as an example where liberal and conservative Christians alike are almost fanatic in holding to their respective opinions. The council, in its conclusion, insisted that there must be an ecumenical response to globalization, where sectarian points of view are avoided and cooperation encouraged.

The second theme of the

convention was international peace. The Lutheran vision is for a different world – one in which religion is a factor in defusing conflict, not propagating it. The Assembly approved the US "Roadmap to Peace" in the Middle East as having true potential for a solution.

Dr. Krause, however, expressed concern that the United States is too militarily superior. "It has resolved to use war as a political means when that serves its own interest," he said. "International law cannot safeguard peace if the USA does not respect it, and prefers to replace international law by the right of a mighty one."

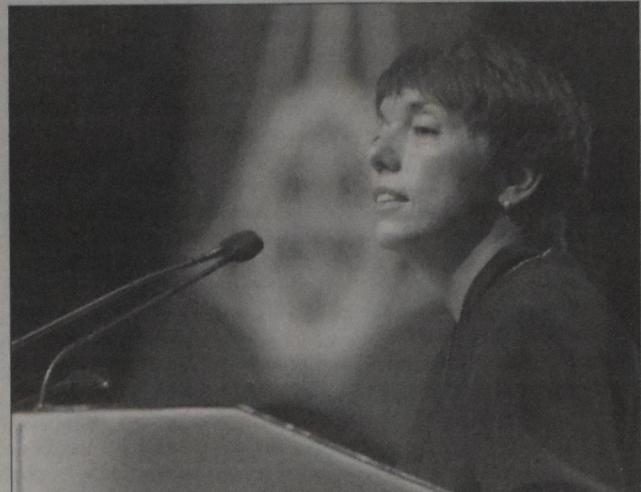
The LWF, however, called for the UN to intervene in Liberia. Sumoward Harris, a Lutheran Bishop from that country, spoke to the Assembly, saying that "we have been crying for so long.

Now it is time for the international community to come to our rescue."

The final pledge of the council was to participate fully in the "Decade to Overcome Violence," which includes the following: to stop abuse within families, especially against women and children, to confront increasing militarism and the proliferation of weapons, to advocate against displays of violence in the media, and to actively oppose expressions of religious fundamentalism.

The third issue that the Assembly dealt with was social justice, on a global scale. The delegates identified the following problems: the gap between the rich and the poor, the marginalization of indigenous people, and international debt. The LWF declared its intention to promote trade and development policies that ensure the availability of safe water, adequate nutrition, shelter, healthcare and education. The council also stated that "external debt has in fact become a modern tool of domination," and called on Lutheran members to challenge commercial banks, if they have been involved in illegitimate lending, to cancel their claims. The Assembly committed itself to supporting basic human rights for indigenous people in every country.

The keynote speaker, Dr.

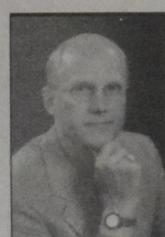


German Bishop Margot Kaessmann delivers the keynote address.

Margot Kaessmann, encouraged the audience to participate in her talk, creating an unusual dialogue. Bishop Kigasung, of Papua New Guinea, responded to her invitation by telling the gathering to 'listen again' to parts of Genesis, when God asks of Adam "Where are you?" and of Cain "Where is your brother?" These stories challenge us, he said, to listen to our brothers and sisters "with eyes wide open," and to answer the call to accountability implicit in God's questions. Dr. Neyeloff, from Latin America, also spoke; she said that in her

country, men, and especially women, feel "the pain of injustice, corruption and unnecessary death."

The Lutheran General Assembly closed with a message of hope. It affirmed that "in the midst of all the suffering and injustice, God is continuously at work, healing our world." Kaessmann, the keynote speaker, said that "Christians are able to bring into [the brokenness of the world] the healing Word of God. They are able to look at the world, without closing their eyes or looking away."



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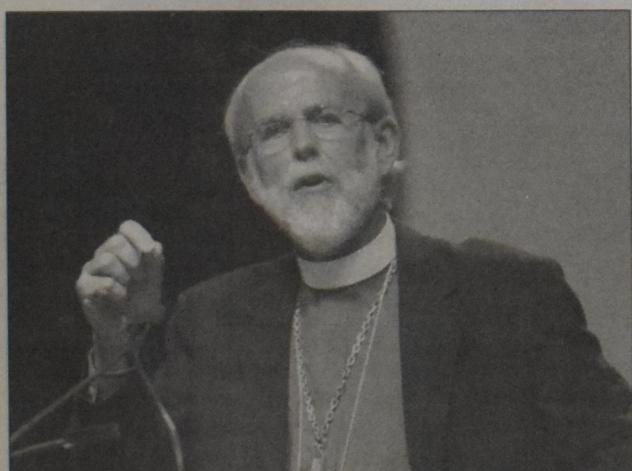
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ELCA presiding Bishop Mark Hanson.

Editorial

On being part of the people walking in darkness

Harry der Nederlanden

An evil genie, born from an excess of good energy that suddenly mutated into its opposite, flashed along the high tension wires from Ohio up into Michigan, leaping across the river into Ontario at Detroit, to zip back into the US again in upper New York state – all in a matter of seconds. In an excess of wild energy, wherever he skated along the line, he zapped the safety devices installed to protect against such dangerous gremlins. And as the doors and windows slammed against him, he rampaged across the continent in search of more places to wreak havoc, seeking to outrace alarms of his coming.

Alas, at last he ran into a station where they weren't sleeping at the switch. Had it not been for some very swift action by vigilant engineers in Pennsylvania, we are told, he might have succeeded in romping across most of Canada and the US instead of being confined to the northeast. As it was, he put some 50 million of us in the dark in a matter of minutes, extinguished television and computer screens, and left fridges, freezers and air conditioners gasping.

At the CC office, we had just finished sending the last pages to our printer in Woodstock when the genie struck. "Aren't we lucky!" we said. Rose and I had just turned off our computers, having decided to go home early for once. When the lights went out, we stepped outside to see whether others in our neighborhood had lost power as well. Maybe, we thought, Ineke had overloaded our circuits again. But across the street others popped out of darkened offices to squint at us and look up into the sky.

Despite the secularity of our culture, most of us are still oriented toward heaven. When the lights go out, we look up into the sky, wondering whether God has retracted his "Let there be...." None of us yet knew that it was all the work of a super genie we ourselves had created, a genie

driven berserk by our excessive demands.

Although we left the office a scant ten minutes after the power went off, as we headed home traffic was already beginning to back up on Ontario Street where it crossed the highway. "This entire end of town must be affected," we said, as we waited our turn at a non-functioning traffic light.

"I wonder why they don't put traffic lights on a separate circuit," we wondered.

As we learned about the scope of the blackout on the car radio, we wondered about many other things as well. We wondered why we had never acquired a battery-operated radio, so we didn't have to go out to the car to listen to the news. We wondered at our wisdom at keeping an old phone, as we discovered that the cordless ones no longer worked. We wondered why so many controls are now electronic when the old ones worked just as well. (I couldn't even turn my air conditioner to "off" so it wouldn't immediately kick in when the power came on again.) As the house grew dark, we wondered where all the batteries had gone for our flashlights. We wondered how to make coffee without a percolator. (We found a way. Even the wicked genie couldn't deprive us of our coffee!)

We also wondered at the vulnerability of our energy dependent country and economy. Just take CC for example. Over the last ten years we have become wholly dependent on the computer and the internet. At the beginning of the summer, we were still doing some of our layout with the scissors and wax method, making PMTs with a camera as big as a jazz band, and sending each issue to Woodstock by Fedex. Now everything is electronic. Ineke, high-tech evangelist that she is, converted us all, and now we all speak digitaleze. When the power is off, I'm not receiving articles and stories. I can't access the ones I have. We can't do any layout. And we can't send it to Woodstock to the printer (whose power, we heard, stayed on during the entire blackout).

Yes, like the folks in the big city, we felt our vulnerability, our connectedness and our dependence. We learned that it's hard to hit the toilet in total darkness (at least, I learned that); that playing monopoly by candlelight can be fun; that moonlight (it was almost full moon) can be a real help when you get up in the middle of the night; and that candlelight is hard to read by.

Some gloated because they found themselves in an island of homes the genie had missed – but not for long, as friends and relatives started dropping in to enjoy their air conditioning and watch T.V. Some (like Bert Hielema) gloated because they had their own source of power. Some gloated to think of their neighbors stumbling about in the dark, tripping over toys, cats and shoes while they basked in the light. The rest of us experienced a deep sense of solidarity-in-darkness. That was, it strikes me, a good thing, for it was to a people steeped in darkness that the light came.

American commentators gloated because although there was no looting in New York City, there was looting in Ottawa. Actually what happened in Ottawa was this: a bunch of people came to register their guns and they broke into the wrong place.

Alright, I admit I gloated too. By some freak occurrence, one block in our neighborhood was left with power. In that block was a Tim Horton's and it was only four blocks away. And in that Tim Horton's I found a seat where I sat reading and sipping coffee till far into the night. Coiled around that Tim Horton's like a boa constrictor around a plump piglet was a line-up of cars that extended far into the darkness. In that Tim Horton's worked frazzled maidens who did not light a candle against the darkness; they just

cursed the darkness as desperate coffee drinkers kept pouring in.

I discovered that, although like the rest of my decadent generation I do run after the gods of technology, there's also something of the luddite in me. To see such a god fall on its face gives me a shiver of delight. Even as I rub my own shin. The mega-blackout was a Titanic moment but without the bodies. I loved to listen to the bigshot engineers and CEOs sputtering their befuddlement to reporters on the radio: "This wasn't supposed to be able to happen. So I can't explain how it was possible." I was sure some spin doctor from a First Energy of Ohio would soon go on the air to explain that it hadn't really happened at all.

Our politicians were swift to react in the style to which we've grown accustomed. Chretien blamed it on the US, and NY Governor Pataki blamed it on Ontario. The Bush administration didn't blame it on deregulation, they began looking for terrorists – in California, where the lights are bright and there's an election brewing. After all, it's easier to find things in the light than in the darkness. Come to think of it, there hasn't been a US president in recent history who didn't prefer darkness over light at some time or other.

From New York City there were many stories of public-mindedness and altruism. One young man held up as a shining example in the blackout crisis went out of his way to chaperone three lovely maidens stumbling about the pitch black streets of the big city. When their feet began to ache, he even offered to let them stay overnight at his apartment. There's a man who deserves to be emulated. In this cynical age it did my heart good to learn that there were young men out there braving the darkness like knights of old to rescue young maidens from danger.

As a writer, I appreciated the fact that people learned to use new words or rather old words with new content. Radio commentators kept speaking of "cascading blackouts." They took positive delight in the word, repeating it again and again. The word and the concept cascaded over our heads like a wave breaking over surfers. You must admit that it's much more colorful than speaking of a domino effect. To have a cascading effect is to turn a mechanical thing into a huge wall of plasma tumbling across the continent like a tidal wave. It turned the blackout into a natural event like a forest fire.

This event also inspired deep theological and philosophical thoughts about the nature of connectedness. There is something spiritual about this gigantic network in which anyone in our two countries (except for Texas and Quebec) who needs it can draw energy from anywhere that has a surplus to offer. It's a communalist vision of sharing. (If only the invisible hand controlling it all wasn't wearing a Rolex watch.)

The fact that this grid connects everyone to everyone else is its strength, for that way it can almost instantaneously shift power to where there is a sudden peak in demand. If demand exceeds supply, brownouts result. In that strength, however, is its weakness. An injury to any small part in that vast, imposing grid may bring tears on the other side of the country, as a power surge flashes through the grid triggering safety devices everywhere.

The system, you see, protects itself, shutting down to save generators to power up another day. That this results in me not being able to make coffee or turn on my air conditioner, the system doesn't care – not even one little bit. Although we create systems to care for us and give us security, it's only you and I who can truly care for one another – and that's only because we are plugged into another energy source.

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Letters

What we need: one school system that reflects the Canadian mosaic

Gerald Vandezande

Traditionally, Ontario's mainline political parties have insisted that one "secular" public school system is essential for the unification of diverse groups of people in Ontario.

Remarkably, despite the current emphasis on multiculturalism, they have promoted an ideology of assimilation in education.

An unavoidable question then arises: If politicians believe that one system of education is so crucial for the unification of Ontario residents, then why do they not also insist on one political party? Why do they permit three different political parties with diverse political perspectives and platforms? Why do they practice pluralism in politics – the very diversity they deplore in education?

Ontario urgently needs a consistent educational policy that promotes the common good of all, without discrimination against any.

One need only ask our First Nations neighbors about the perils of the ideology of assimilation in education.

A truly pluralist education system is inclusive, non-sectarian and democratic.

It comprises all members of the public. It invites faith-motivated and other values-based independent schools to become integral partners in a system that fully accommodates their alternative educational per-

spectives and programs. Such partners would be seen not as fearsome competitors but as friendly contributors to an enriched, multi-faith, multicultural education system that advances quality learning for neighborly living and Canadian citizenship.

It is possible, within a consistent educational justice policy, for Christian, Jewish, Islamic, Sikh and all other students to receive the kind of education that reflects their respective beliefs and values.

For example, in Alberta, Edmonton Public Schools (EPS) are giving people educational choices.

EPS programs ensure parents and students have various options in educational programming while following the provincial curriculum. The options are developed based on feedback from parents and the community. Their spectrum seeks to meet the changing needs of students.

The alternatives include a number of aboriginal programs and Christian schools, language programs, including Cree and French as a second language, and Arabic, Hebrew, Mandarin and Ukrainian bilingual programs. Then there are special-needs programs and a number of transition programs for students at the junior and senior high school levels who are not experiencing success in traditional school environments.

Let me emphasize that this choice is

available under one public umbrella, adequately funded by the government.

As I have advocated at Queen's Park, the Legislature should empower both the public and separate systems to allow and enable the local boards of education to provide the equivalent of Edmonton's model.

Alternative programs and schools would be required to meet specific educational guidelines and fiscal conditions, such as following the provincial educational criteria and being publicly accountable to the relevant school boards.

The goal would be to promote diverse learning opportunities and responsiveness to students, parents and various communities, as well as provide accessibility and flexibility.

In this way, various alternative educational programs and independent schools could be accommodated and become integral partners within the public and separate systems.

This open system would be genuinely representative, adequately funded and publicly accountable.

It would develop mutually acceptable academic criteria, curriculum guidelines, teacher qualifications, admission policies, and health and safety standards. All partners would respect the world views and core values that reflect our Canadian mosaic.

Such all-embracing education helps to build a caring and sharing society that increasingly becomes a beacon of hope and light. Our political parties owe it to the common public good to work together in a non-partisan way on this major project.

Educational justice delayed is educational justice denied. Delaying fiscal fairness is denying fiscal fairness.

Delaying justice and fairness is like saying to poor and powerless people, "We'll be fair and equitable to you after we've taken care of the rich and powerful."

It's like saying to aboriginal peoples and visible minorities, "We'll recognize and respect your legal equality rights and fundamental freedoms after we've looked after the rights and interests of white people."

It's like saying to gay and lesbian people, "We'll safeguard and secure your human rights and civil liberties after heterosexual people's demands and interests have been looked after."

Clearly, that would not be a fair, just and respectful way to demonstrate genuine regard for the human dignity and human rights of all Ontarians.

An inclusive system recognizes that different people have different beliefs and have the legal right to live and educate in different ways.

Good public policy ensures that all citizens and communities, with their various views of life and education, can exercise their legal equality rights and fundamental freedoms.

All are entitled to enjoy the equal protection and equal benefit of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the Ontario Human Rights Code, and the U.N.'s Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which recognizes in Article 26 (3) that "parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children."

Let's resolve to demonstrate, in Ontario law and public policy, full-fledged justice and educational equity for all Ontario students, parents, teachers, schools and boards.

This column appeared in the Toronto Star, July 7. Do you agree that the Edmonton model is a good one, or do you see problems with it? Send us a letter, either by regular post or e-mail: editor@christiancourier.ca

Don't tamper with marriage!

The traditional "made-in-heaven" marriage is only a dream. The 37-year marriage of my wife and me has not always been a bed of roses and moonlight. We have been blessed with four beautiful and healthy children who in turn have gotten married raising children of their own. They also happily subscribe to the traditional family.

To be against this poorly thought out same-sex marriage law proposed by the Liberal government in Ottawa surely does not make me intolerant or old-fashioned does it? Is the sun intolerant when it rises in the east and sets in the west every day of the year? Does one become the pilot of a Boeing 747 when one puts on a pilot's hat? Does one become "liberated" by participating in a gay parade? Of course not!

Both my wife and I were born in the Netherlands. That nation was the first to legalize same-sex marriages. The next country was Belgium to the south. By the way, the Netherlands was also the first to legalize euthanasia two years ago. Am I proud of these developments? I certainly am not. Do I want Canada to follow suit? The answer again is no.

You don't have to be Dutch to realize that poking a hole in a dike, i.e., traditional marriage, is a foolish thing to do. Drilling a hole and trivializing traditional marriage seriously harms the moral fibre of a nation's society, as it already has done in Holland.

Recently a lady from Rotterdam who

visited our Bed and Breakfast told us that she had two cars stolen from under her nose during the last couple of years. This has become a common occurrence in Rotterdam and in other major cities in Holland. And the incidence of purse snatching, rape and murder has also increased dramatically, even in rural areas of the country. No doubt about it: when time-tested institutions like traditional marriage are recklessly disregarded and tossed aside, society will pay a heavy price.

As church-going citizens, my wife and I resent being marginalized as proposed in the same-sex marriage law. No, I am not Roman Catholic and neither is my wife, but we certainly are thankful that Pope John spoke out unequivocally against same-sex marriage last week.

We are deeply concerned about any adopted children or children born by artificial insemination from gay couples. Such offspring could become the pitiful victims of separation or divorce. I have witnessed the tragic consequences of such same-sex "marriage."

In conclusion, we plead with law makers and of course our Prime Minister Chretien as well as all citizens of Canada to stop this legislation going forward.

Phone 416-870-4424 and say NO to one-sex marriage today!

Henry Lammers
Parry Sound, Ontario

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Movies

Violence on the open range

Harry der Nederlanden

I'm a sucker for a good western, and when it comes to westerns, I admit, they don't have to be masterpieces for me to enjoy them. *Open Range* probably won't be ranked among the best westerns of all time and it certainly won't be in the running for a place among film classics. Nevertheless, I enjoyed it for the piece of popular culture that it is.

Does the film, however, possess any deeper value than the two hours plus of entertainment that it offers? What is it about such works of popular culture that we enjoy? And why is it that we enjoy certain kinds of art even though we are aware of their shortcomings? Are such popular genres as the western, the detective story, science fiction or historical romance merely opportunities for escape?

Essential to a western are wide open spaces – hills, valleys, arroyos, canyons, distant mountains, deserts, big rocks to hide behind, rivers to cross, endless prairie, grass for cattle and preferably a few cactuses (you wouldn't call them "cacti" in a western). Oh, and sky – vast skies that strain the eye. At some moment in the western (film or novel), the hero will stop, lean forward in the saddle, and gaze pensively into the distance. He's not looking at anything in particular, he's just looking toward the far horizon which recedes into forever.

Yes, just say "Big sky country" and my heart is filled with the kind of yearning that C.S. Lewis says is our tie to the pre-fall creation.

The landscape is the sine qua non of the western as I see it, but it would be hard to have a western without horses, ranches, ropes, cows (I like the long-horned ones), saloons, cow towns and so on. These are the paraphernalia of a simpler time, when you made a living by rugged physical work in a stark environment that required certain basic virtues for survival.

The heroes must be lean, rugged men able to defend themselves in a fight, whether with fists or guns. Actually, there are a lot of westerns that undermine the stereotype of the tough, fearless individual handy with both his fists and his six-gun, but they all presuppose it.

The conclusion of many critics of pop culture is that the western is a genre that teaches us what it



means to be a real he-man – a rugged individualist who can take care of himself and who doesn't take guff from anyone, a man acquainted with the harshness of the environment and of life and who knows what it is to be free.

If this is all there is to westerns – an escapist genre that nostalgically looks back at a simpler time when men were men and that teaches an anachronistic model of manhood – shouldn't we be avoiding such stuff? Maybe my fondness for the western is something I should be ashamed of.

Freeloaders and freegrazers

I think there's something more that happens when we read or see a western, and *Open Range* is a good example of that more complex process that popular art can set in motion.

Open Range was filmed in southern Alberta in the rolling foothills with the Rockies as a distant backdrop. An outfit composed of four cowboys, or actually two men and two boys, are herding cattle on the open range. The foreman and owner of the herd, called simply Boss (Robert Duvall) doesn't own any land or a ranch; he just grazes his herd on public land – open range. Ranchers also depended on public land adjacent to their property to feed their much larger herds.

From the perspective of the order that followed after the days of

the unfenced frontier – the order imposed by private property, the law of property rights (fences), landowners and money (capital) – Boss and his crew are gypsies and freeloaders. A sign in the town that figures in the story equates vagrants and "freegrazers," which is what those who grazed their cattle on the open range (or commons) were called. (Ironically, they play the role that Indians occupy in many westerns.) So we get a classic contrast between, on the one hand, law and order as the subjection of the small to the rich, and on the other, an order without subjection and without property and without greed.

The small community of four – Boss, Charley, Mose and Button – works more like a family than like a business enterprise. Charley (Kevin Costner), who (we learn quite soon) has been traumatized by the Civil War, has of his own free will adopted Boss as his employer and mentor. He has teamed up with him less to make a living than to absorb virtues he admires – patience, integrity, self-possession and detachment from the need to own things. There is a dark, violent side to Charley that he himself fears, and he needs the simple discipline embodied by Boss to keep it in check. Boss is his better self.

The other two cowboys are also wounded, cast-off creatures. Button is a saloon orphan whom Boss and Charley took in, and who has

harmony?) for supplies. The Spartan little utopia of the freegrazers clashes with the order rooted in the town. The big rancher who founded and dominates the town considers freegrazers to be a kind of parasite that has to be eliminated.

Notice, though, that the contrast is not between rugged individualism and community. Those living in town form less of a community than the band living out on the range.

Polarities and stereotypes

None of this drama is very original, especially not the clusters of values that are played off against each other. It is a polarity that haunts not only westerns but also sociological thought (society vs community, city vs country) theology (law vs freedom) and philosophy (the state of civilization vs the state of nature). In the Old Testament, too, cities are often places of corruption and danger to the nomadic Hebrews. These polar values are deep-rooted, mythic structures that, whatever we may think of them, continue to resonate in our collective imagination.

We know we're supposed to identify with this group of free frontiersmen and hate the rich rancher who uses the law to deprive others of their freedom and honor. This is the way popular culture works: it exploits types which are often also stereotypes.

Yet, we are moved. We take sides in the clash that we know is sure to come. It is inevitable. The two orders are incompatible.

In westerns there is often an elegiac tone to the conflict. The order that awakens our yearnings by its rugged simplicity is an order whose time is past, as Boss himself admits. It is a way of life



Movies/Television

doomed to disappear. The very momentum of history is against it. But this only makes the stand of Boss and Charley more heroic. Just as the lone cowboy silhouetted against the vast horizons of the western landscape and the endless sky is heroic by virtue of his smallness, so is his stand against time.

The polarity between town and country is not absolute. When Charley and Boss come to town, they are helped by a strong, independent woman, Sue Barlow, the doc's sister, and Charley and Sue feel an immediate affinity. Although the hero in westerns is invariably seeking to be free of the tentacles of the city and the money economy, he often dreams of domesticity – of a fine woman to love, a roof over his head, a bed to sleep in, and (sometimes) kids of his own. But he will not sacrifice his freedom and integrity for these basic things that make life good, but which also tempt men to make compromises that leave them spineless.

Westerns tend to set up a stark either/or that asks: What have you surrendered of your integrity to achieve the peace and comfort you now have? This stark either/or, to be sure, is not just the stuff of popular culture; it is also the way the Bible lays out our choices. At bottom, they are simple: integrity vs compromise; justice vs power; freedom vs fear; natural order vs a society built on money.

Inevitable violence

Boss and Charley will not compromise; they will not walk away in the face of the overwhelming power of the man of the future – the rancher who wants to own all he sees. So violence is inevitable. And we know that there's a dark side to Charley capable of great violence. (A common type. Compare the hero of *The Patriot*, who butchers a whole troop of British soldiers.) When he is with Sue, however, Charley shows a gentle side: although these are hard, rugged men, we see they are not oppressors; they are, as one critic has put it, shepherds with guns.

When the violence comes, however, Charley explodes into a killing machine. In the middle of the climactic gun battle, Sue rushes into the fray to help the wounded boy, Button, and she witnesses the violence Charley is capable of at close quarters.



At the end she and Charley look at one another: both are spattered with blood, and as the camera focuses on Charley's bloodied face, there is fear and pleading in his eyes as he looks at Sue. She has just seen the dark side that he has been seeking to suppress. As the camera shifts to her, we see horror in her eyes. Is she horrified by him? Has Charley just lost his chance for love and a normal, peaceful life?

The western is haunted by the question of moral equivalence: Are the two men who confront one another in the classic showdown, the good guy and the bad guy, just mirror images of one another? What distinguishes one man ready to kill from the other?

This is the anxiety at the basis of many westerns: the violence of the corrupt must be met with the violence of the just, but will the latter also be corrupted by the (necessary) violence? This raises a further question: Does the western invariably normalize violence?

It certainly dwells on it, but with reason. One thinker after another has shown that the founding order

of peoples and nations is stained with blood – not just the settling of North America or the winning of the west (overrunning the native peoples). Boundaries, law and order, trade and prosperity – all the things we call civilization – have origins shrouded in violence. The popular western (and some other genres as well) force us to remember that and to remind us that there are stark choices to be made.

What direction the reflection spurred by the movie takes depends on us. *Open Range* poses the question, Must the warrior who is stained by the violence needed to defend a just freedom be exorcised from the community like a scapegoat? Or is there a place for him too? In a vague way, the western revolves around the consciousness that the good life is somehow rooted in violence and sacrifice, that is, the awareness that the cross stands at the center of history. Life is about ultimate choices, and although we are all drawn into the violence of imposing order, everything hinges on dispelling the ambiguity and deciding for integrity.

Something to think about:

Open Range has at its centre a band of wounded misfits. The same is true of *Sea Biscuit*, where a horse that has been injured and rejected puts hope into the hearts of the owner, the trainer and the jockey, who are all similarly wounded. The film very explicitly makes the connection between this small group and all those wounded by the economy of the depression. The courage and triumph of the race horse, we are led to think, brings hope and healing to an entire nation. So the horse becomes a type of mediator. (Incidentally, this is also the kind of role this film, and perhaps all art, seeks to perform.)

Compare the film, *The Horse Whisperer*, of a few years ago. In that story the healing of a wounded horse and a wounded girl are linked. Do these films teach us something about the nature of healing and redemption?

Idol worship

Ron VandenBurg

Reality shows have taken over the networks this summer. Three variations have emerged: the cut-throat competition (*Survivor*, *Big Brother*, *Fear Factor*), the dating show (*Cupid*, *For Love or Money*, *Joe Millionaire*) and the talent show (*Canadian Idol*, *Star Search*, *Fame*). *Idol* has started up its many imitators, but like *Survivor*, I believe it will have a long life, because it hits Western culture right in its worldview.

The show starts with a giant man walking and towering over the city landscape. He morphs into a silver covered female singing into a microphone. The familiar music plays throughout. You've just met the Canadian Idol.

Canadian Idol is the younger (poorer) sister of big brother *American Idol*, which began as the television phenomenon *Pop Idol* over in the UK. The show has other relatives in South Africa, Poland, Germany, and other countries. It surrounds itself in superlatives and has television ratings that executives drool over.

How Does the Show Work?

Pop Idol UK – History was made with the biggest ever telephone vote the UK has ever seen, and the show was watched by over 14 million fans.

American Idol – American Idol last summer became an overnight success, with the eventual winner, Kelly Clarkson. With two shows each week, American Idol's audience grew every time out, culminat-

ing with over 30 million viewers for the finale.

The second season of American Idol was even more successful. After 50,000 auditioners, Ruben Studdard was crowned the next American Idol.

Canadian Idol – Canadian Idol is the number one program in Canada this summer in all demographics. The Monday night performance episode is consistently the most-watched show of the week and Tuesday's results show also ranks in the Top 10. At the time of this writing the Tuesday's results show attracted 1.24 million viewers.

How Does the Show Work?

Think of it as a complex talent show with each competitor singing their best each week, hoping for a recording contract. In Canada, it started with 100 competitors chosen from across Canada through a very long and difficult audition process.

In Toronto, over 10,000 young people waited patiently for their 30 seconds in front of four record industry professionals. Another series of auditions whittled it down to 30. Then all Canada chose the top 11 through a phone poll. It's the only show I know that can make money not only through television sponsors but also by ticket sales of a live event and phone service charges.

Each competitor is assigned his or her own toll-free number (e.g., 1-866-9-IDOL-XX – where "XX" is the number assigned to the competitor) that will appear on screen and be announced during Monday's performance show. After the broadcast is over, viewers can cast their vote by dialing the phone number of the competitor for whom they wish to vote. The phone lines remain open for two hours following the broadcast.

As I said earlier, Canadian Idol and its counterparts reach out and grab Western culture right where it counts – in its individualism and its celebrity worship.

When interviewed, the people in the line-ups all said the same thing, whether they were standing in Chicago, Los Angeles, Toronto or Calgary: "I've been singing since I was very small. It's a dream of mine"; or, "I think I have what it takes"; or, "I want to be a rock star"; or, "I want it more than anyone else here."

..See *Idol* p.15



Jenny Gear from Newfoundland

Church

Kenya's churches called to unite and resist Western influences

Fredrick Nzwili

Nairobi (ENI) — The controversy in the worldwide Anglican Communion over homosexuality has led to a call for Kenya's Methodist, Presbyterian and Anglican churches to merge to better resist "Western" influences.

The call came from retired Kenyan Anglican bishop John Mahiaini, who said that by joining forces churches in his country could resist the influence of what he called Western lifestyles, such as the election of gay bishops and the blessing of same-sex unions.

"The idea is important following the election of the gay bishop, Gene Robinson, in the USA," Mahiaini told journalists.

Anglican leaders in Kenya and elsewhere have condemned Robinson's election and also a church blessing for a same-sex union

in an Anglican diocese in western Canada whose bishop had approved a liturgy for such a blessing. Kenyan Methodists and Presbyterians have supported the stance of the country's Anglican leadership.

Still, former South African Anglican archbishop Desmond Tutu visiting Kenya last week for an international conference, said being gay cannot bar one from being ordained as a bishop.

"Our position in South Africa is that sexual orientation is not a significant bar for anyone to be a priest or a Christian, provided the ordained gay person remains celibate," Tutu told journalists on his arrival in Nairobi. The Federation of Churches in Kenya, an umbrella for independent churches, however, said Tutu's remarks in Nairobi "flout biblical principles".

Support for attempts to unite the three

Kenyan denominations came from the Rev. Zablon Nthamburi, former presiding bishop of the Methodist Church of Kenya.

"We had been talking for some time, but this time we have resumed seriously to unite the three to become one," he said.

Kenya's Anglicans, Presbyterians and Methodists have cooperated since 1955 in training ministers at St Paul's United Theological College in Limuru, near Nairobi.

"We are only separated by ideological and historical reasons, but we use the same Bible and hymn books," said the Rev. Gerishon Kirika of the Presbyterian Church of East Africa.

But attempts to promote church union in East Africa in the early part of the 20th century and again in the late 1950s floundered over issues such as the role of bishops, ordination, and the sacraments.

Canada's largest church endorses same-sex marriage

Lawrence Morahan

(CNSNews.com) — Weeks after Canadian high courts ruled to allow same-sex marriage in two provinces, delegates from Canada's largest Protestant community passed a motion calling on the federal government to endorse same-sex marriage throughout the country.

The 38th General Council of the United Church of Canada, a union of Methodists, Presbyterians and the Congregational Union of Canada, passed the motion after just 45 minutes of debate at its annual conference in Nova Scotia in mid August.

Conservatives warned the motion could have implications for churches in the United States and elsewhere. Linda Harvey, president of Mission: America, a conservative public policy group, said the Canadian church's decision likely will impact churches in the United States.

"I don't think it's inevitable that we will follow suit in this country, but I do believe that there will be mainline large denominations in this country, possibly the United Methodists, possibly others, that will endorse same-sex marriage in the near future," Harvey said.

The United Church is seen as one of the most liberal churches in Canada. In 1988, it became the first major church to ordain open homosexuals, a move that caused a large number of members to leave. In 1992, it created a liturgy for blessing same-sex unions.

The motion calls on the church to lobby the Canadian Justice Department in favor of same-sex marriage. The difference between last week's motion and previous church statements in support of same-sex marriage is this motion actually uses the word marriage, church officials told reporters.

The United Church leaves it up to the more than 3,000 congregations in Canada and Bermuda to decide if they will marry same-sex couples.

The vote threatens to heat up the battle for votes in Parliament over same-sex marriage legislation.

Since Canadian provinces legalized same-sex marriage, there has been a conservative backlash in the churches and in the legislatures, similar to the effect that recent pro-homosexual rulings had in the United States, Harvey noted.

"There has been quite an awakening in Canada since the legalization in Ontario of same-sex marriage, among the conservatives in the churches, so I think that the same thing is happening in the US," Harvey said.

A recent poll of Canada's 170 Liberal Party members showed that 48 opposed same-sex marriage and 60 were in favor. Others were undecided or did not respond.

A clear shift in public opinion on same-sex issues appears to be emerging in the US as well. A recent Washington Post poll showed that 60 percent of Americans disapproved of the Episcopal Church's decision to recognize the blessing of same-sex unions.

Kenyans commended for confronting their past

Fredrick Nzwili

Nairobi (ENI) — Former South African Anglican Archbishop Desmond Tutu commended Kenya's attempt to confront her "painful" past through a truth commission, following the ousting of a decades-long government in elections last December.

"You have made a wonderful beginning. There is no question that with your will, commitment, and prayer, you will succeed," said Tutu, who chaired the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission that investigated the apartheid era.

"But you should tread carefully and sensitively given the ethnic differences in your country," cautioned Tutu in his inaugural address at an international conference in Nairobi on truth commissions that took place

in mid-August.

The conference, attended by world renowned professors, judges, members from other truth and reconciliation commissions, and human rights activists, was convened by a task force looking into the establishment in Kenya of a truth, justice and reconciliation commission.

The task force was set up following last December's elections that defeated the ruling Kenya African National Union party, which had been in power for 40 years and had faced allegations of corruption and human rights abuses.

"We need to establish a commission to reconcile with each other so that we can find a way forward," Gideon Ireri, Anglican bishop of Mbeere told ENI. Speakers insisted

such a commission would not be a witch hunt, but would seek fairness.

Kenya's minister for constitutional affairs, Kiraitu Murungi, told the conference that mechanisms such as truth commissions, known as transitional justice, were inescapable for countries emerging from decades of misrule.

"We must develop an agenda for transitional justice in Kenya, in which corruption and human rights abuses are ended," Murungi told the conference. "The past must be confronted and impunity banished. The truth must be known, perpetrators must be called to account, and victims must be recognized and provided with redress."

Archbishop Desmond Tutu urges churches to unite

Fredrick Nzwili

Nairobi (ENI) — Desmond Tutu, the former South African Anglican archbishop, in Kenya to attend an international conference on truth commissions, urged African church leaders to support the efforts of the All Africa Conference of Churches in working towards church unity.

At a church service in Soweto August 10, Tutu had urged ecumenical partners to support the Nairobi-based AACC, a grouping of 169 national churches in 39 African countries representing about 120 million Christians.

"As we strive to uplift our people we need AACC as our continental body to walk with us," said Tutu, a former president of the AACC.

On Sunday, in Soweto at the same ecumenical service as Tutu, the general secretary of the World Council of Churches, the Rev. Konrad Raiser recalled the way in which churches had worked together in South Africa in the struggle against apartheid.

"They found far greater strength by witnessing together to the powers and principalities than they would have had if they had acted separately," Raiser said in his sermon at an ecumenical service to induct South African Methodist Bishop Mvume Dandala as the AACC's new general secretary.

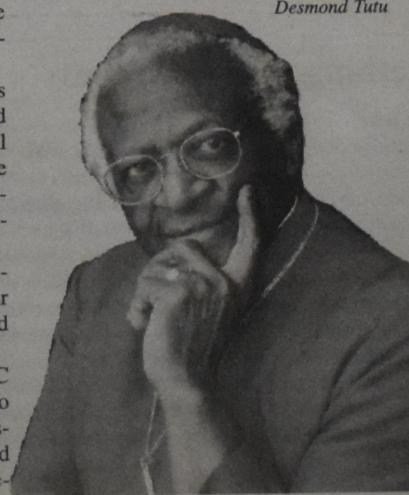
Raiser said he had been saddened in his 10 years as WCC general secretary to find on many visits to Africa that "the local churches live their separate lives alongside each other, sometimes even in active competition. Their leaders gather on special occasions, but keep away from each other.

"But it is at the local level that our ecumenical commitment and in particular our efforts to create a united church must find expression," said Raiser.

Making his acceptance speech as AACC general secretary, Dandala said, "I want to promise that the AACC will fight for justice and social righteousness." He decried the "wastage of meagre community re-

sources to sustain a multiplicity of denominations" as "a scandal the Church in Africa must address."

Desmond Tutu



Church

Buddhist mobs attack five churches in Sri Lanka

Sarah Page

DUBLIN (Compass) — Mobs attacked five churches in the southern district of Galle, Sri Lanka, on August 2. Initial information from the Evangelical Alliance of Sri Lanka (EASL) suggests the organized attack on the churches is part of the government's plan to introduce anti-conversion legislation.

A Methodist church in Rathgama suffered an initial attack on July 27. Christians who saw the crowd of 50 Buddhist monks and a number of young people moving toward the church that morning alerted the police, who arrived on the scene in time to prevent the monks from entering the building. The monks shouted abuse at the Christians and threw stones at the church in retaliation.

The monks then issued an ultimatum to the Christians to tear down their church by Saturday, August 2. If this was not done, they would return with a force of 400 monks and burn down the church themselves. One of the monks also threatened that they would destroy a total of 18 churches in the district.

Police warned the monks not to resort to violence and to present themselves for an enquiry at the police station on August 2. Officers stood guard at the church over the following two days, but protection was withdrawn due to a lack of manpower.

Ten of the Buddhist monks arrived at the police station for the appointed enquiry and were warned not to resort to violence. However after leaving the police station, they headed directly to the Rathgama Methodist church and launched an attack, throwing stones and destroying pews and benches in the church. They also beat two church workers, who required hospital treatment for

their injuries.

A Buddhist monk armed with a shovel chased another church member, Mr. Ariyadasa, threatening to beat him to death. Ariyadasa managed to escape, but the monks later attacked his home and destroyed furniture and other possessions.

Local Buddhist villagers expressed anger at the attacks and have shown solid support for the church. Since the attack, villagers have posted a nightly guard to watch over the property.

Several other churches in the Galle district suffered attack on August 2. Details of the assaults are still emerging.

According to the Evangelical Alliance of Sri Lanka (EASL), the spate of attacks marks the beginning of an attempt to incite Buddhists against the Christian community. This would create an environment of religious disharmony which, in turn, would provide an excuse to introduce new anti-conversion laws in the country.

Buddhist and Hindu groups in Sri Lanka have called for the introduction of these laws for several years in an attempt to stop the growth of evangelical churches. Until recently, governments have chosen not to enact such laws.

However in November 2002, Mr. Maheshwaran, the Hindu Cultural Affairs Minister, made a visit to Tamil Nadu, one of five states in India that has enacted anti-conversion laws. On his return to Sri Lanka, Maheshwaran made a public statement vowing to introduce a bill in Parliament to curb religious conversions.

A draft bill closely modeled on the Tamil Nadu anti-conversion law has now been prepared, according to the EASL, leading to increased attacks on Christian churches in recent months.

Missionaries in Northeast India school charged with forced conversion

Abhijeet Prabhu

BANGALORE, India (Compass) — Police arrested a missionary and four church leaders after Christian groups in the state of Nagaland were accused of forcing people of other faiths to convert to Christianity.

The missionaries were arrested last month in the neighboring state of Arunachal Pradesh and jailed for allegedly participating in insurgent movements.

Arunachal Pradesh was one of the first states in India to frame an anti-conversion law.

Baptist leaders clarified that the Naga missionaries were appointed in 2001 by the Chakhesang Mission Society to work among the people of the Tutsa Naga tribe in Changlang and Tirap districts of Arunachal Pradesh. They also said that one of those charged, Rev. Ara Shijoh, was totally dedicated to church ministry, and allegations of his involvement with terrorist groups were baseless. The other four arrested were all respected Baptist pastors and church officials.

A vilification campaign against the people of Nagaland accusing them of being anti-patriotic and indulging in terrorism has influenced government policy against the state for a number of years. About 98 percent of Nagas are Christian, most of them Baptists. Hindu fundamentalists have accused them of receiving support from fundamental Baptists in the United States.

The Naga International Support Center (NISC), a human rights organization based in Amsterdam, has strongly condemned the arrests of the missionaries and described it "as an attack on Naga Christianity." The NISC also dismissed the



Radical Hindu activists

allegations of forced conversion as part of a defamation campaign.

Buddhists also level accusations

Buddhists living along the Assam-Arunachal border are accusing the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN) of forcing locals to convert to Christianity.

Over 20,000 Burmese tribal peoples have sought asylum in India, among them the Singphos, Tangsas, Khamtis, Taiphakes and Taikhamians who practice Buddhism and reside along the Assam-Arunachal border. Local leaders allege that the NSCN is on a drive to convert the tribals to Christianity.

"These areas are dominated by the NSCN, who demand money, food and now say all people here must become Christians," claims Moulang Bhante, Buddhist chief priest of the Myanmarese tribes. "For the safety of our religion, Buddhism, we have to take some safeguards."

"So far, I know they are visit-

ing some places in Assam," Wannasara Bhikku, another Buddhist high priest, said. "We came to know they visited Kamba next to Lekhapani camp. They are visiting again and again in Arunachal Pradesh. They force Buddhists to convert to Christianity."

Local leaders also accuse the NSCN of burning down an animist Rangphra temple in Arunachal Pradesh last month.

In another incident in early August, authorities of the St. Francis Xavier Primary School in Bangalore were accused of attempting to convert a 12-year-old Hindu girl to Christianity. According to allegations, authorities took the girl, a top student in her class, to the Ave Maria hospital on the pretext of conducting a medical check-up.

Once there, she was given an injection, after which she collapsed. The girl was then allegedly hypnotized to say that she wished to join a nunnery and that she hated her parents and her religion. The girl's father said that the school authorities lured his daughter to convert by telling her they would make her a doctor.

School authorities have denied the allegations.

Hindu fundamentalists groups, however, have led protest demonstrations demanding that the government suspend the school's license.

Observers say that the incidents prove that Hindu fundamentalists are becoming more brazen in their attacks against minority religions, vilifying Christians even in areas like Nagaland and Bangalore, where they constitute a sizeable proportion of the population.

Hindu militants attack Bible school in India

Vijayesh Lal

DEHLI (Compass) — On the evening of July 31, students and staff of a Bible school in Dabwali, Haryana, India, were at prayer when they were attacked by about 250 people. The assailants were mostly members of the militant Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) organization and were led by a local BJP politician (a radical Hindu party) and ex-member of the Legislative Assembly.

The assailants shouted anti-Christian slogans and accused the

25-member student body of converting people in the area. They also objected to the screening of a film depicting the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The mob burned Bibles and Christian literature, vandalized the school and smashed furniture. They beat the students, including five females. One girl managed to telephone the police, but the mob disappeared before officers arrived at the scene.

When the police did arrive,

ficers threatened the students and warned them of consequences if the Bible school continued to operate in the town. They refused to take action against the attackers.

Police also refused to file a First Information Report, a mandatory requirement for reporting such incidents. Instead, they arrested six of the Bible school students, later releasing them following intervention from local Christian leaders.

Christians comprise 0.08 per-

cent of the total population of 21 million in Haryana, considered to be the Indian state most unresponsive to the gospel. The majority of the Christians there worship in independent and emerging churches, which suffer the brunt of persecution.

According to Rev. R.E. Howell, the Bible school has enjoyed good relations with the local community until now. Howell was away from Dabwali on the day of the attack.

Friendship

David and Jonathan: a Judeo-Christian appreciation

Dr. Rem Kooistra An Unlikely Friendship (1 Samuel 18:1-4, 20)

Friendship is issue-oriented. C. S. Lewis says that friendship can be about almost everything. He writes, "It may be a common religion, common studies, a common profession, even a common recreation" (*The Four Loves*, Fontana Books, p. 62). Lewis is also right when he points out that in this commonality a specification must take place. Community is not yet friendship. "The man who agrees with us that some question, little regarded by others, is of great importance, can be our Friend. He need not agree with us about the answer" (p. 62).

Some friendships are predictable, others are not. The friendship between David and Jonathan, described in the first book of Samuel, was unpredictable. David and Jonathan were supposed to be enemies, rivals, devoured by jealousy. Instead, they became close friends. It happened suddenly as with many friendships. "Jonathan became one in spirit with David, and he loved him as himself" (1 Samuel 18:1). (It is possible that the final redactor of 1 Samuel used two different manuscripts, hence the repetition.)

Most likely Jonathan heard David speaking to his father, King Saul, before David killed Goliath. During that interview David spoke the language of trusting faith. He said: "Your servant has killed both the lion and the bear; this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, because he has defied the armies of the living God" (1 Samuel 17:36).

This was indeed faith language. For the army of the living God at that time was nothing but a bunch of soldiers, who, when they saw Goliath, were running like frightened hares from the Philistine hero "in great fear" (verse 24). David offered his service even though he was not a soldier, but just a shepherd boy. He simply said to the king: "Let no one lose heart on account of this Philistine; your servant will go and fight him" (verse 32).

The outcome of this was that King Saul initially liked David very much (16:21). Yet when the dancing girls sang: "Saul has slain his thousands, and David his tens of thousands" (18:7) (which was not intended to anger the king but was not wise), Saul's love for David changed into a rage of jealousy; he even saw his crown threatened by this upstart. His brooding mind thought: "What more can he get but the kingdom?" (verse 8).

Saul in his sick mind did not hear the girls sing "Saul ... and David..." but rather "Saul ... but David..." Like many dictators after him --- Stalin, Hitler and Saddam Hussein --- Saul turned into an assassin. The next day he twice hurled his spear at David. When that did not succeed, he devised a plan to have David killed by the Philistines.

Yet, no matter how much Saul hated David, it did not change Jonathan's loving



ILLUSTRATION BY PIET KLASSE FROM "BIBLE FOR CHILDREN"

friendship. There was a secret and spontaneous bond between them.

Homosexuality? It has been suggested that the story contains two instances that indicate a homosexual relationship between the two friends, but I don't think this to be true. We will look at these statements.

Agape Love

In 1 Samuel 18:4 we read: "Jonathan took off the robe he was wearing and gave it to David, along with his tunic, and even his sword, his bow and his belt." Since underwear was not customary in those days, Jonathan stood there that morning on that dew-drenched field naked or almost naked in front of David. But nudity is not homosexuality. Soldiers often see each other unclothed. It is army-style.

But here we witness a ceremonial act. It shows complete surrender and a deep spiritual understanding. Jonathan knew that God had rejected his father because of his father's disobedience and autocratic, high-handed behavior (chapter 15). Therefore Jonathan would not and could not be the next king. So the prince royal stepped back to leave his place to David, the man God had chosen. While he accepted David as his future ruler, Jonathan remained always faithful to his father.

In this story Jonathan is great. Here Jonathan becomes a foreshadow and a promise of the Messiah, who also gave up his robe and was nailed naked to the cross. Both Jonathan and Jesus laid down their lives for the salvation of God's people. Both show deep, sacrificial love. Their love is agape. Sex is not involved. That morning a halo of holiness rested on Jonathan's head, a halo that dimmed the glow of the golden crown waiting for David (2 Samuel 1:1-7).

The Death of Saul and Jonathan (1 Samuel 31, 2 Samuel 1)

The second instance of alleged homosexuality comes from 2 Samuel 1: David's lament for Saul and Jonathan. This lament is one of the most beautiful parts of the

Old Testament, even of world literature.

I remember vividly how during one of my visits to Israel our young Jewish guide read this lament on the Mount Gilboa, east of Carmel and south of the plain of Jezreel. She read it with all her Jewish passion: "How the mighty have fallen," words that occur three times in this lament. These words reveal raw sorrow. Our guide -- Miriam was her name -- read it as if it had happened yesterday. It brought tears to my eyes and cut deeply into my soul.

After all, Saul was the anointed king. And he was brave. In many regards Saul was a good king. He ruled Israel in very difficult and turbulent times for forty years and deserves more recognition and appreciation than he often gets from preachers and Sunday school teachers.

We know that when David was a fugitive, hunted by the king, he spared Saul's life twice in deep respect for the "LORD's anointed" (1 Samuel 24:5 and 26:9).

It is remarkable that 1 Samuel ends with the death of Saul and 2 Samuel begins with the anointing of David, the new king, the man of God's heart. 1 Samuel ends in darkness: all seems lost. Israel has been defeated, the country is overrun by the enemy, the king is dead. And so is his heir and successor, his son Jonathan. The Philistines have desecrated the corpses of the king and his sons and crucified them on the wall of Beth Shan.

Has God abandoned his people and forgotten to be gracious?

How heavy lies the curse on the rejected king who once was the elected one. It is an image of what would happen to Jesus. He was the innocent one who took the place and punishment of the guilty one. That makes all the difference.

But then there is a new book, a new king, a new beginning. There is David, God's chosen one. There is something like a resurrection. God is still there. Thus there is hope.

When David returned from the battle against the Amalekites, whom he had been

fighting successfully for his master, "a man arrived from Saul's camp, with his clothes torn and with dust on his head" (2 Samuel 1:2), the signs of mourning. He brought sad news indeed: Saul's army had fled. Many soldiers had fallen and died. And, worst of all, Saul and his son Jonathan were dead also. Ironically, this man was an Amalekite. But it seems that he had somehow joined the Israelite army. He sensed that God was with Israel.

When David asked him for more information about Saul's death, the man told him, "And there was Saul, leaning on his spear, with the chariots[1] and riders almost upon him" (2 Samuel 1:6). "When he turned around and saw me, he called out to me and I said, 'What can I do?'" (verse 7) After the man identified himself as an Amalekite, the king said, "'Stand over me and kill me! I am in the throes of death, but I am still alive'. So I stood over him and killed him" (verses 9,10).

This is the story of a typical collaborator. In 1 Samuel 31:4 we are told how Saul, when he saw that he was in a losing position and wanted to prevent being taken captive alive by the enemy, the uncircumcised Philistines, asked his faithful armor-bearer: "Draw your sword and run me through" (that meant: "kill me!"). This soldier "was terrified and would not do it" (verse 4). He could not kill his king, the anointed one of the Lord.

Saul then took things in his own hands and fell on his sword and courageously killed himself. To him honor was worth more than life.

This also explains David's rage described in 2 Samuel 1:14-15. The Amalekite had fabricated his own version of Saul's death. He imagined that David would be very pleased to hear that his arch-enemy was dead. He saw a pot of gold waiting for him and perhaps a nice job.

But David did not fall for his story. He who had spared the life of king Saul twice was not taken by the royal diadem and the golden armband given to him. This is what

Friendship

David said to the Amalekite: "Your blood be on your own head. Your own mouth testified against you when you said, 'I killed the LORD's anointed'" (2 Samuel 1:16). The profiteer's opportunism led to his death. He dug his own grave.[2]

David's Lament (2 Samuel 1:19-27)

There is almost no contrast more poignant than between the Amalekite and David recorded in 2 Samuel 1. Here it draws a deep antithesis between the Amalekite's pretended sorrow and David's genuine mourning. Although Saul no longer loved David, David never stopped loving Saul.

David's lament for Saul and Jonathan is at the same time also David's eulogy for his deceased king and king's son. The lament has three stanzas marked by the words: "How the mighty have fallen" (verses 19, 25 and 27).

In the first stanza Saul and Jonathan are called "Your glory, O Israel." This glory is gone now, defeated, slain on the hills of Gilboa. The Philistines should not know this. The shame should be hidden. The hills of Gilboa, which drank the blood of the fallen heroes, should bear an everlasting curse of infertility. But Israel should remember the many victories of Saul and Jonathan over the enemy, the Philistines. The bow of Jonathan never backfired and Saul's sword "did not remain unsatisfied" (verse 22).

Then the lament turns directly on Saul and Jonathan. In life and death they were one, "swifter than eagles, ... stronger than lions" (verse 23). The daughters of Israel should remember the peace and prosperity that they have enjoyed for many years. Saul and Jonathan were a great blessing for the country and the people in many ways. It almost seems impossible to continue now that the mighty have fallen!

Then follows the second stanza, devoted exclusively to Jonathan, David's special friend. David sings with tear-filled eyes: "I grieve for you, Jonathan, my brother; you were very dear to me. Your love for me was wonderful, more wonderful than that of women" (verse 26).

No, this is not a song about homosexual eros. There is nothing physical in it. It recognizes a love of another level, a sacrificial love, a love marked by the word agape. Here you see Jonathan giving up all he has and is for David. Just as Jesus would do later: "Having loved his own who were in the world, he now showed them the full extent of his love" (John 13:1). "The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep" (John 10:11). The Greek text says that Jesus loved his own *eis telos*, that means "to completion, to the full, to the end." We might say: to the last drop of his blood.

Now there is nothing left to be said. The beauty of this lament is in the last stanza: "How the mighty have fallen" (verse 27). The curtain falls. Silence.

1. It seems very unlikely chariots were used in the pursuit of the fleeing Israelites. An old commentary in Latin makes the smart observation: "It seems that this was the beginning of the lies of this young man." See David Erdmann, *Die Bücher Samuelis* (Bielefeld und Leibzig, 1873), p. 340.

2. Dr. H. J. Lankman in his commentary on 1 Samuel calls the execution of the Amalekite a "cruel event" and "offensive to our feelings". H. J. Langman, "De Boeken 1 and 2 Samuel", in *De Bijbel en zijn Boodschap* (Leeuwarden: Jongbloed, 1953), pp. 154, 155. Later on Langman corrects himself and speaks about *lese majesty* [treason] and even sacrifice by the Amalekite.

This article on friendship is a chapter in Remkes Kooistra's new book (forthcoming): *God, Love and Sex*.



FROM A. DE VRIES' "STORY BIBLE FOR OLDER CHILDREN"

Back to school

Intangible Things

Heidi VanDerSlikke

Heidi VanderSlikke

Jack stood by our bedroom window early one morning, enjoying the late summer breeze. "Funny how sometimes just a certain smell in the air can make you feel like a kid again, isn't it?" he commented, referring to times during his childhood when he and a buddy would sleep in a backyard tent.

"I know exactly what you mean," I answered. The night before, the sight of a neighbor's flower garden had transported me back to my years as a student in Mrs. Patterson's grade 2 and 3 classroom.

When I was growing up, Ivy Patterson was my neighbor as well as my teacher. She lived two doors down from my family. Most evenings she puttered about her yard, caring for her shrubs and flowers with a tenderness she seldom displayed in the classroom. The plethora of bright blooms was her pride and joy, especially the cosmos, her favorites, which stood tall and graceful in the September sun.

She was a widow as long as I had known her. Now and then my dad sent me to her door with a gift of vegetables from our garden and she would invite me in for milk and cookies. The house, as neat and well organized as Mrs. Patterson, smelled like her trademark talcum powder. I could hear the clock tick in the parlor, and through the open door I spied a framed photo of her handsome, grown-up son on the piano. He was something of a celebrity in our small town — a professional singer who lived in the big city of Toronto. He even appeared on television sometimes, but strangely, Mrs. Patterson rarely spoke of him. Maybe she didn't want to brag. Maybe she didn't approve of his lifestyle. I don't know.

Far more beautiful than mythical elves

During school I looked forward to each day after lunch when Mrs. Patterson read Bible stories about ancient heroes like Abraham, Daniel or David. In the 60's, public school teachers didn't have to apologize for their Christianity. Knowing Mrs. Patterson, she would have taught us about God regardless of Board policy. One day as I sat scratching some dried paste off the side of my desk, she thought I wasn't listening to the story. After warning me once, she sternly sent me out to the hallway. It was bad enough to have Mrs. Patterson angry with me, but worse that I didn't get to hear what happened when Jacob and Esau were reunited. My classmates filled me in at recess.

I will never forget the sight of her supervising us for Phys. Ed. She stood on the tarmac, grey curls squashed beneath the sunbonnet tied tightly under her chin, a metal coach's whistle dangling from her neck. Her no-nonsense support hose and orthopedic Oxfords made it clear not to mess with this woman. At her signal we would dutifully run laps or perform push-ups or jumping jacks. More than once I climbed the school stairs fearing my knees would buckle. Good thing she wasn't any younger, or she might have killed us all through overexertion!

At the age of seven I learned sadly that there was no Santa Claus. The same year Mrs. Patterson taught us that the first word in Christmas was "Christ," and the truth of the season was far more beautiful than mythical elves and flying reindeer. Her lecture on why we should never use the word "Xmas" has stayed with me all these years.

Even though we were young, Mrs. Patterson constantly challenged us with new words. The day after John F. Kennedy was shot, she stood by the blackboard and announced, "Today I have an ugly, ugly word to teach you." With that she began printing on the board, "A-S-S-", (and our jaws dropped), she continued, "A-S-S," (and there was a collective gasp!), "-I-N-A-T-I-O-N. Assassination," she finished. What a relief! We didn't yet know what the word meant, but at least our teacher wasn't using obscenities.

The last time I saw Mrs. Patterson was on my wedding day. I hadn't seen her for years, but there she was — older, still standing ramrod straight in her shiny black Oxfords. She smiled and shook my hand. I hugged her. She wiped a tear from her eye as she said, "I always knew you'd turn out to be a fine young woman."

Now it's the season when kids go back to school. The days are cooler and shorter. The scent of autumn is in the air. I biked past my neighbor's yard the other night and admired her huge patch of cosmos, a rich profusion of deep pinks, brilliant lavenders, and sparkling whites. I thought of my old teacher again, a woman with a personality more colorful than a Mennonite garden, whose influence on me has lasted a lifetime.



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Musings

On bowing to trees

I love books. If there's any area where I know I've been guilty of coveting, it's in the presence of Books. Just entering a bookstore causes an increase in my heartbeat and a sense of excitement akin to what Lewis and Clarke must have felt when they were told the Pacific Ocean lay just beyond the next hill.

I've been in treatment for years now and I'm a member of BBB, our equivalent of AAA. BBB is not a second-rate AAA. It stands for the Band of Biblioholic Bookworms. It used to be called the Brotherhood of Busted Biblioholics, but that was sexist. Still, it began as an all-male organization of those of us who had been picked up on suspicion of coveting in some big-name bookstore. The little, used bookstores let you get away with it; they're more understanding.

It may be true that women actually read more than men generally speaking. But men like to possess the books themselves, flip through them, fondle them, sniff them, stack them up, arrange them on shelves – all those things that delight true biblioholics. The statistics on the addiction aren't reliable, according to the BBB, because many men will not tell the truth to pollsters and interviewers. It's a very sensitive matter because it may cast aspersions on one's manhood.

I'll never forget the evening a bunch of us guys were watching the Stanley Cup playoffs together. Somehow or other, during the break between periods, one of the guys said his favorite writer was Tom Clancy. He said he'd seen all the movies. Another named Robert Ludlum and a third Louis Lamour. Clancy writes war stories, Ludlum spy novels, and Lamour gritty westerns. The book-talk got me excited, and before I knew what I was doing, I blurted out: "I'm reading *Sense and Sensibility* for the third time. I just love Jane Austen. She's probably my favorite author!"

The room suddenly went quiet. Hands that had been reaching for pizza slices and coke cans paused in mid-air as though someone had pushed the freeze-frame button. The host cleared his throat and gradually the room disengaged from its freeze mode. But a subtle change in mood had occurred. The masculine bonhomie was gone. The testosterone level had dropped



several degrees, as if a sudden cold front had passed through.

After Don Cherry had given youngsters a few pointers on how to throw devastating hip-checks and the next period had begun, I made up some excuse to leave. I felt like a priest at a stag party. As I went out the back door, I heard someone speaking the name "Jane" in a high falsetto and the room behind me burst into deep, uproarious, masculine laughter, the kind men save for men-only gatherings.

I was never invited to another Stanley Cup play-off party. (Come to think of it, though, Toronto Maple Leaf fans haven't had a lot of reason to party in a long time.)

Yes, I'm coming to the trees

mentioned in the title, and it has nothing to do with the campaign against turning trees into hockey sticks. That campaign, I believe, was launched by tree-huggers in Saskatchewan. In Saskatchewan there is a common belief that it takes an entire tree just to make a single hockey stick. In fact, in Saskatchewan, sometimes it takes two trees – one for the blade and one for the handle. Saskatchewan trees are not the kind of trees one is inclined to bow to.

To merit that kind of respect and reverence, a tree at the very least has to throw enough shade to cover your entire body when you lie down under it, and it has to be tall enough that you can't speak to it face to face. It has to give you a crick in the neck when you look

up to it. Actually, it's the looking up, straight up, that's the important criterion. The shade part I threw in as a sop to human weakness and laziness.

On one of my walking routes in my home town, there is a stretch of road lined on one side by a number of towering horse chestnuts. Perhaps "towering" is not the right word because we think of towers as coming to a point, and horse chestnuts don't come to a point. They have an ample, maternal shape, as if motivated by a desire to gather into their shelter as much of the surroundings as they can. A single horse chestnut can span an entire yard.

These trees celebrate Spring by decking themselves out in a bounty of white or pink flowers perched

on the ends of their spreading branches like candles, no, like small chandeliers. When I saw that row of them along the road as I was walking to church a Sunday morning in June, I was reminded of the parable about the maidens and their lamps. Those chestnut trees were a row of bossomy bridesmaids, each holding bouquets of lanterns blazing merrily, lit by the early morning sun.

I stopped and looked down Linwell to see whether the bridegroom was coming. A few cars sped by but no wedding procession. Still, it felt to me as if a wedding procession or some other kind of joyful, solemn ceremony was on its way. Those chestnut trees were definitely celebrative, priestly presences, part of a welcoming party – for the new day, for the sabbath, for the season, for the procession of the Creator and his angelic retinue down this sunlit avenue.

So as I passed by beneath them, I bowed to them just as Catholics bow to a bishop to show him reverence. Well, I didn't really bow; after all, I am a Calvinist. I sort of inclined my head. It helped to take the crick out of my neck.

My point is that lofty, noble trees acquire a stature, a kind of subjectivity that I can only think of as religious. They invoke in me a sense of awe, wonder, reverence, imbued with gladness and gratitude. Sometimes church services do that too. But not very often. The newer songs and liturgies don't tend to put a crick in your neck. They tend to go to your feet instead.

I often find myself tapping my feet to the rhythm. But maybe that's not so bad; after all, Paul says the feet are just as important as the neck. And getting a crick in the neck has no socio-economic benefits.

I read somewhere that when the first Europeans landed on the eastern coast and saw those tall, straight trees reaching far into the



Tree rings

Musings

sky, one of the first thoughts that popped into their heads was, "What a huge supply of masts! We'll make a fortune supplying the sailing ships of the world!"

In those days, masts snapped as easily and as frequently as hockey sticks during the play-offs.

The question that posed itself to my tree-sensitized mind was, "Would I ask those gorgeous, inspiring trees to sacrifice themselves to make hockey sticks? Even if they were for the Maple Leafs and they were playing for the Stanley Cup?"

It struck me as blasphemous even to seriously entertain the question.

Some of you may suspect that I had fallen under the direct spell of the spirit of those huge, blazing chestnut trees. Did they insinuated themselves into my mind as I passed underneath? Was I held in thrall by their imposing majesty? Maybe. Men are easily impressed by size.

There are few tree huggers, I'm told, in the middle of Saskatchewan. But that may also be because to hug a tree in Saskatchewan, you have to walk a long, long way, and men are lethargic.

But would a tree willingly sacrifice its life to be turned into a novel?

That's the kicker. Calvinists like to think that norms or goods don't really conflict. But I love trees and I also love books. Moreover, I'm also the editor of a paper that con-



Flowering chestnut

sumes trees, the more the better. Every two weeks a tree gives up its life just so I (and others) can circulate drivel of the sort I'm writing here.

But when I go into my library in the basement and gaze at all those hundreds upon hundreds of lovely books.... Actually, some of them are not very lovely, they're old and tattered. A few of them were even rescued from a garbage can at Dordt College. Some of my books carry the signatures of CRC pastors long dead. Years ago when Calvin seminary library received the libraries of deceased ministers, duplicate copies would be sold for as little as 25 cents. That's how I picked up most of my Kuyper and Bavinck. "Dated stuff," some people scoff. Right. And so is Plato and Aristotle and Augustine and Calvin and.... The list is endless, endless.

And they all still have voices. Death has not silenced them. I know Augustine and Kuyper, Chaucer and Shakespeare, Kant and Dooyeweerd, Dostoevski and Jane Austen because there's such a thing as books.

This is how I visualize it. When you cut down a tree and look at the cross-section, you see ring after ring, layer after layer of growth -- like a tightly wound scroll. Some of the rings at the heart of the giant redwoods in California, I'm told, were formed during the years when Christ walked this earth telling his parables.

In the making of books, those trees open themselves up, spreading themselves layer after layer to receive the words, the voices, the thoughts and feelings, the hopes and visions of generation after generation --

back to the time of Christ and even long before. Alright, I admit some of the original writing wasn't done on paper made from trees, but that's how it has been passed on to the reading public for hundreds of years.

Books are trees that have opened their hearts to human beings, unfurled themselves so they can serve as our messengers and our memories. God has angels to tell us what he's thinking, and we have trees.

It is because of trees that an ongoing conversation ripples back and forth across time, between Moses and Isaiah and Matthew and Paul and Augustine and Aquinas and Luther and Calvin and Kuyper and Bavinck and Van Ruler and you and me. For less than the price of a meal, you can go back to the time of the Greeks and eavesdrop on Socrates' academy as he questions his students. You can pick up letters that the so-called Church Fathers wrote to those believers who were forming congregations all over the Roman Empire to help them figure out what it meant to serve Jesus Christ.

You can read the rules St. Benedict developed for men who wanted to live lives of special devotion to God in a monastery. You can read very funny stories written in the fourteenth century about a group of pilgrims who exchanged stories as they made a pious pilgrimage to Canterbury in the spring, when April with its showers sweet pierces to the roots the tender crops. You can challenge your mind with weighty tomes written by the brightest thinkers who have lived, and for a tiny fraction of the cost of a university course. (Beware, professors, you can be replaced by a tree!)

So, you see, the relationship between human beings and trees is a complex one. Trees don't just provide relaxing forest retreats and shade from the sun, they don't just serve as a source of hockey sticks and framing for your house or oak veneer for your furniture. Trees have entered into our very inwardness, for they enable us to examine ourselves, to reason with one another, to pass along our experiences and wisdom to the next generation. There is no Western mind, no culture or civilization without trees. We have inscribed our collective soul into the hearts of trees and they have kindly embraced us.



In praise and anticipation of the color green

savor this green like the first spring sticky lime leaves
shoots sprouting against concrete
crayons and paint on a clean page

these green August days I'll print twice
for remembrance
this fieldsome green against the forever blue of a summer sky
the sun-warmed forest floor in cool moss colors
a flutter of leaves splattered in sunshine variations

when tomorrow fades
into fall finery fallen in frostbitten
colored piles to be raked

when the bold whiteness of winter
gives way to dull April

we'll touch the pictures in our minds
of Payne's Grey storm clouds
beyond the aspens and maples
windblown green in the sunset

in praise and anticipation
of the color green

The facts of life

so you think she shouldn't have died
some quirky in the universe
where were the angels?
your question understandable
you don't like the system
want to remake it fix it
no young people dying
everybody goes to heaven
no earthquakes landmines
no death
that's the one you agonize over
the one that comes with the package
so you cry to God fighting it

even though underneath you know
that he already has

Poems by Linda Siebenga

People who have conversations with trees are, therefore, not quite as odd as you might think. It's a conversation in which we're all involved. There are those plotting furiously nowadays to shut trees out of that conversation by turning all words into electronic signals coursing about in cyberspace like dust motes in a beam of sunshine. Such a project appeals only to those who think that the products of the human spirit should be flimsy as dust, capable of being blown into new configurations by every puff from the lungs of some contemporary windbag. Theologians and churchmen especially like to stick out their chests and crow like roosters about new paradigms. Like the big, bad wolf, they think they can Huff and Puff and

blow down whole forests of green wisdom. But the trees don't mind. They take into their shelter and company even the nosiest peacocks. None more tolerant and catholic than the nation of trees. Even liars and blowhards get to have their say. Good thing too; else how would any of us ever get a chance to be heard?

But if you don't want to be caught talking to trees, you can always just try listening. No one will fault you for that. If you do get the urge to bow to a particularly venerable species of trees, a royal, Calvinistic bow will almost go unnoticed. If you do it three times in succession, people will think you're just limbering your stiff neck. Your fellow church members will probably appreciate that.

Christian Mind

Half a carnival

Peter Schuurman

We have twice as many students arriving at Brock this September, and half of them are a year younger than usual. Imagine these 17-year-old kids walking into this busy marketplace of competing ideas and interests. As in a marketplace, there is an intense energy and color in the atmosphere, and the variety of people and products is enticing. But it can be overwhelming. The din of raised voices may startle, confuse, and even turn one numb.

"Carnival" is the name of Orientation Week at Brock – an outdoor fair presenting new and returning students with all the clubs and services available to them at the university, along with a few recreational additions. In the past, this has included a trapeze, beer tent, concerts, and a Bruce Trail hike (the latter led by me). Overall, it's a time for the student to get settled, make some friends, and sign up for some hobby groups, faith groups, and part-time work.

Norman is Frank (about Sex)

All new students are encouraged to see the one-man cabaret entitled "My Dick." Norman Nawrocki is the actor and writer of this show (and an alternative show he's done in years past entitled "Sex Toys"). Using humor and blunt talk about sex, the characters of these shows encourage students to have safe sex and not to pre-judge those of different sexual appetites. This serves as the introduction to sexual activity on campus.

I was asked to attend one of these shows a few years back in order to be available for counseling afterwards. No students took advantage of this service, but I did get a chance to speak with Nawrocki. I told him I really appreciated his candor, and wished that I had been on a campus where such frank discussions of sexual topics could take place.

I also said that I was disappointed that along with the sanctification of choice and autonomy, no mention was made of the option for chastity. Additionally, no characters came from religious communities that had long traditions that challenged much of the choices and opinions that were made in the course of the show. "This leaves out many students in your audience," I said, "and does not reflect the full range of sexual ethics that they may choose from."

The Illusion of Choice

To call the university a marketplace is an appropriate analogy in many ways. However, the range of ideas and interests that are given priority and presence is not random or comprehensive. Students need to be aware that what the university offers is not "universal" in any way, and can never be so. *Caveat emptor.* An example is the absence of a religion/theology department at Brock, a gap in their curriculum to which many students are oblivious. Some offerings are determined by supply and demand, but many stem from a vision that selects and supports some offerings above others.

Although there are no specific classes that critically reflect on it the way a faith-sponsored school would reflect on its particular confession, confessionally Brock is a secular school. In this way it is a microcosm of our country in many ways. What options are available to people are often pre-determined. In other words, consumerism is a myth if it means that the buyer is free to choose what they think is best. This is especially true if people no longer have an imagination that considers alternatives to what is available before them.

The freedom to choose is a gift that many people have been unable to enjoy. Not just because they are politically disabled from increasing their range of choices, but because in the choosing you never know if you have made the right choice, and are left with remorse and second thoughts.

The greatest gift in this regard is the freedom that comes in knowing you have chosen rightly, and you sleep unhampered by anxiety. To sleep well is a special grace, and every 17-year-old student, if she needs anything, needs deep, refreshing slumber.

Peter Schuurman is back from sabbatical and has resumed his campus chaplaincy work at Brock University in St. Catharines, Ont.

CAMPUS CULTURE

What is Hamas and what are they doing in Palestine

Whenever there is violence in the Middle East between Israel and Palestine we hear the name Hamas. Hamas often takes credit for the suicide bombings and Israel in turn keeps targeting Hamas leaders. In the wake of the attack against a bus in Jerusalem August 19 that left 20 people dead, including six children, Maximo Introvigne, director of the Center of Studies on New Religions, explained the place of Hamas in Palestine to Zenit.org, a Catholic news agency.

TURIN, Italy – The religious factor cannot be overlooked when it comes to analyzing the fundamentalist movement Hamas, the Palestinian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood, says Maximo Introvigne. Introvigne is author of many books, including *Hamas: Islamic Fundamentalism and Suicidal Terrorism in Palestine*, published by Elledici.

Q: What exactly is the Hamas movement?

Introvigne: Hamas is part of a great international galaxy, Muslim fundamentalism, which influences millions of people. It is a Palestinian branch of the Muslim fundamentalist movement, the Muslim Brotherhood, founded in Egypt in 1928 by Hassan al-Banna. In 1954, Egyptian President Nasser declared them illegal and persecuted them, which caused an internal division.

On one hand, there is a radical branch that is faithful to the Leninist formula of the coup d'état. On the other, there is a neo-traditionalist branch which tries to pursue Islamization at the grass roots level. It . . . hopes to take power but first wants to win over the society, organizing Muslim labor unions, Muslim schools, Muslim newspapers.

In 1957, the directorship of the Muslim Brotherhood in Palestine aligned itself with the neo-traditionalist position, ceased all military activity, stopped organizing attacks, and dedicated itself to redouble the number of mosques in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.

It built a network of fundamentalist institutions village by village, and neighborhood by neighborhood.

Between 1957 and 1987, there was armed and terrorist activity in Palestine linked to the lay nationalists of Fatah and other compo-

nents of the PLO.

However, the intifada broke out in 1987 at a time when the PLO was weak. The Muslim Brotherhood declared that the neo-traditionalist operation had been successful and that the radical phase could begin, the phase of armed struggle. The Muslim Brotherhood is now strong throughout Palestine. Hamas forged a word there which means "fervor" and which, at the same time, is the acronym of the Islamic Resistance Movement.

Q: Is it an overstatement to describe Hamas as a religious movement?

Introvigne: No, in fact, we can define it as that. Often, in the West, the error is made of regarding religious phenomena as superstructures. This is a legacy of the Marxist analysis. Clearly, there are multiple causes in all complex phenomena, and economic, political and religious motives are intertwined. However, in the case of Hamas, religion is a determining element.

According to its constitution, its objective is to transform Palestine into an Islamic state, that is, rule by the Shariah [Islamic law] with an eye to the reunification of the whole Muslim world in the Caliphate. Article 14 is even more specific: The liberation of Palestine is an obligation for every Muslim, no matter what country he lives in.

For Hamas, the Palestinian question is not one of many along with Chechnya, Kashmir and others. It is central – and not just for political but also for theological reasons.

Q: Would it be utopian to think that Hamas could disappear altogether from the Palestinian Territories?

Introvigne: Yes. The fact is that between members and sympathizers it numbers hundreds of thousands of people. The solution to the problem of Hamas cannot be solely military.

Q: Does Hamas use religion to justify terrorism?

Introvigne: In Muslim fundamentalism's view of the world, there is no difference between politics and religion. What is more, to state that they are different is considered a typically Western prejudice which they regard as foreign to Islamic tradition.

Hamas devotes a great deal of attention to overcoming Islamic objections to suicide. Hamas argues that it is not about suicide but about martyrdom, and it finds figures in the fundamentalist galaxy of saints to support its reasoning. It might be disagreeable to say that Hamas' suicide terrorists are motivated by religion. But it is so. It is an error to see them only as being manipulated or as people driven by economic motives.



www.caglecartoons.com/expando

Christian Mind

An analysis of the socioeconomic profile of those who have chosen martyrdom shows that their level, whether of wealth or education, is higher than the average for Palestinians. What is more, two of the terrorists belonged to the upper middle class.

It is the ideology, or rather the religion, which drives them. It is not only despair.

Q: Are there kamikaze women in Hamas?

Introvigne: The truth is that, until now, women have not taken part in Hamas attacks. The movement does not exclude the theoretical possibility. Women have committed suicide in Palestine, but they formed part of the al-Aqsa Martyr Brigades, a secular and nationalist formation.

Hamas states that its theology does not impede the martyrdom of women, and, in fact, it exalts the women of the Chechen fundamentalist movements who have carried out suicide attacks.

It raises, instead, difficulties of a practical character, for example, according to Hamas, women going to Israel would have to go covered by the veil, and this would enable the police to readily identify them.

Hamas states that there are many more Palestinian young men who ask to become martyrs than it can accept. So the women issue is

not of concern for the time being.

Q: Could Hamas put down its weapons and negotiate at the political level?

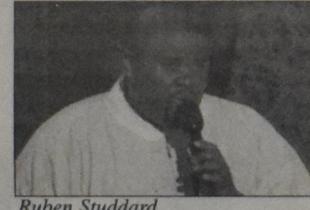
Introvigne: If we limit ourselves to Hamas' constitution, which asserts that the struggle must go on until the Israelis are pushed into the sea, the answer would be No. But Hamas has always been able to combine the poetry of rhetoric with the prose of reality.

Hamas is not a monolith and within it there are more pragmatic currents, especially some of the leaders of the West Bank, which differs from Qatar.

To imagine a peace process, however, which involves only Fatah, or in general the "lay" components of the Palestinian world, and which excludes the religious parties completely, is not reasonable.

One of the great challenges is to find within it those prepared to talk about peace, or at least about a truce or the giving up of terrorism.

The West at times is victim of a sort of "Voltaire syndrome," according to which, the best representative of the Arab world is the most secular and least religious. But representatives without religious roots in countries of Muslim majority often have little popular following.



Ruben Studdard

videos, television and movies, many believe they can imitate their pop idols even though they lack the basic skills, thereby deserving the same shot at fame as the next guy.

As we watched the auditions, my wife and I often wonder aloud when poor performers were shocked when judges expected them to sing on key, to look at the judges and to know the words. We wondered whether these young people had any real support at home — people who were honest with them about their singing skills. Most of those who audi-

Confessions of an ingrate

You have to realize that I've never caught a bass. For me, fishing has always meant trolling for trout in a cold mountain lake with a hot mug of coffee in my hand, waiting for the first strike. So when my friend Mike invited me to do some bass fishing this summer, I was smug.

His friends owned a pond just outside of town. It was stocked full of bass and bluegill, he told me, and we were guaranteed to catch a lot of fish. I agreed and we headed out on the pond in his boat.

This should be quaint, I thought to myself. Casting for some puny bass in a tiny pond on the edge of town. Hardly the rough-and-tumble fishing I was used to. I smirked to myself and started casting out along the edge of the shore.

Bam! I barely had a chance to start reeling in when the first bass struck. It bent the rod over and was soon splashing on top of the water, smacking its tail back and forth. I screamed (my wife was on shore and says it sounded like a little dog yelping) and played the fish, lifting it into the boat.

"That's a nice bass," Mike said calmly and then had his hands full with his own bass.

This went on through the afternoon. By suppertime, the thrill had worn off. A fish would hit and I'd enjoy it, but the excitement was gone. Soon, I started asking Mike about where to catch bigger bass.

He talked about the big salmon he'd caught in Lake Michigan and the 15-pound striped bass that now hangs on his living room wall. I thought to myself, That'd be awesome — to do fishing like that.

Ungrateful

This happens to me too often. I'm ungrateful. I enjoy something the first time it happens and then soon I'm thinking about some other experience that could be better or more amazing. Or I simply forget how grateful I am for the experience.

After the Buzzer

Tim Antonides



Sort of like when my wife got me a ticket to Game 7 of the Canucks-Wild series. Center ice, upper level.

"Wow," I said to Jeff (a friend I went with). "Wouldn't it be amazing to have seats in the lower level?"

This is ridiculous. The issue is very simple: What's it going to take to start being grateful for the events in our lives and the people we share those events with?

My buddy Johnny (sort of a spiritual mentor for me) and I have talked a bit about this. What does it take to be more alive spiritually and to live life in a spirit of gratitude to God? Do we need to lose someone we love or become paralyzed or suffer some other trauma before we finally stop and just be grateful at various moments of our life? Is it a feeling of dissatisfaction in our longing for the perfect heaven? Is it a vague memory of the way things were in paradise? You hear so much about the "price of success." I'm up to my ears with celebrities who've gone nuts with booze and drugs because they're trying to maintain the high of success.

Why is it so hard to just enjoy and appreciate what you have?

More and more, I'm seeing what a disgraceful sin ingratitude is. I hate it in others. I pray that I'll start hating it more in my own life and do something about it.

Like giving thanks for a bass, slapping its tail on a pond at the edge of town.

Tim Antonides is a teacher and sports coach currently studying in Chicago, Illinois



Idols

...continued from p. 7

Andy Warhol's idea of everyone getting their 15 minutes of fame has become more than a catch phrase to our culture. The show dangles the remote possibility of instant fame, and nurtured in the fame worldview, many respond to the cattle call.

Fantasy check

Why do 10,000 young people between the ages of 18-26 patiently wait in a gravel parking lot to be herded into an audition room to be quickly and usually rejected by sharp-tongued judges? The singers all believe that they can do it and that they deserve this chance, even though many have little talent, no training, no experience singing in front of an audience and no idea what it takes to entertain. Having been immersed in a Hollywood culture of CDs,

tioned were not there just for fun. Over and over, the judges' comments were reality checks to the fantasies of the hopeful. Many stormed out of the audition room angry, blaming the judges, not acknowledging the unreal expectations they had built up in their own heads.

Pressures and expectations

Even those who could sing, often fell into the trap of imitating their favorite celebrity instead of being natural and showing everyone that they deserve this walk of fame. But the show itself encourages that kind of cookie-cutter performer. Canadian Idol included a wonderful singer named Jenny Gear, from Newfoundland. She sings for herself with a quirky, unique style that makes the audience appreciate her as an artist. But when the producers asked the fi-

nalists to do group singing/dancing numbers, Jenny was painful to watch as she walked through the choreographed movements, singing songs that are not quite Jenny. The judges, producers and audience all see her talent, but they are trying to find a marketable commodity. If she makes it to the end, watch for the marketing spin on Jenny to start early so she can become the non-celebrity celebrity.

To see this worldview in your own backyard, school community or church, watch your own children and grandchildren and see how they react to music performances. They will typically have one of two reactions. A celebrity worldview can either inflate or crush dreams. First, like the Canadian Idol hopefuls, they may have an unrealistic sense of their own talent, imitating what they see while being applauded by their

peers. Talent is like fashion for them; each has the same image of being unique. Second, when they take lessons, they are quickly frustrated when they don't do as well as the icons they see on television. Peers and adults impose high expectations on kids who are learning to play piano, drums or the guitar.

Do we allow our youth to make mistakes or to even fail? If not, soon high expectations and frustrations overcome personal interest and the talent is abandoned, because "I could never be as good as"

In our Christian communities, let's encourage talent and the arts, building a love for the art itself and guiding the artists to Christian expression that deepens their understanding and joy in our Lord, instead of sacrificing that talent to the celebrity idol.

Family

Grace and the Tool Box

Peter and Pauline are not happy. They have seen a therapist for an hour every two weeks for ten months and they think they have not made any progress. "All we did was complain about each other and become more angry and silent with one another in a way that makes things worse," grumbled Peter. "We need a framework of some kind to hang our hat on or we may as well call it quits because there is no peace in our household," he adds.

Pauline rakes a tired hand through her long dark hair and twists it into a haphazard knot on top of her head. She lowers her arms and folds them in front of her as if she needs to protect herself. She stares pensively at her husband. His haunted eyes trouble her. She knows he works too hard. He is conscientious and dependable and wants to do what is right.

At the same time, their lives have been complicated for the last two years. They had to move twice because of Peter's work, and Pauline's mother has been sick for a few months now. Furthermore, their three children are growing up and tend to make more demands on them.

She glances towards me and says, "I agree with him, we need something concrete, or we will destroy what we once felt for each other."

Our shadow side

Facing the reality of the complexity of marital and family life is rarely easy. Yet, all of us who want healthy marital and family relationships will one day need to look at ourselves to see what role we, in fact, play in our troubled relationships. Peter and Pauline's previous therapist probably worked hard to help them become aware of their own role in their conflicting dynamics. Unfortunately, not all of us are ready to face our shortcomings. Yet, it needs to happen.

Douglas and Naomi Moseley in *The Shadow Side of Intimate Relationships: What's Going On Behind the Scenes*, write that the most troublesome aspect in intimate

relationships is the internal character they call the "emotional child." They strongly encourage us to acknowledge this "sub-personality" within ourselves. Unfortunately, this emotional part of us, does not keep pace with our chronological development.

Consequently, most of us find ourselves, at some point in time in our lives, between a rock and a hard place – we want and need to stay connected to each other but we are so mired in unhealthy dynamics that more and more exchanges become fraught with further misunderstandings, causing more pain in our relationships.

Hard to work with

The Moseley's write that the emotional child is an inner aspect of a person that has not grown up emotionally; it still has attitudes, viewpoints, expectations, fears, and coping strategies of a young person. *All of us*, regardless of chronological age, have this undeveloped child part residing somewhere in our shadow side. Problems arise when we allow it to take charge of our lives, to control our behaviors, and to make major decisions for us. When we are not alert to its presence in our intimate relationships, it can create a lot of trouble.

Therapeutically speaking, the emotional child is not easy to work with. For one thing, we often do not realize we are involved in this kind of behavior (especially, if we do not know what this is about), nor do we want to see it. In other words, we do not realize we are acting out some very old habitual behavior patterns that have not been updated for a long time.

So, what do we most often see when this emotional child takes over? We see ongoing angry and frustrated outbursts, withdrawal, withholding, lack of sternness of boundaries, a need for control, walls and defences, physical acting out, unwillingness to fulfill commitments, and power struggles of all kinds.

When we see ourselves, and others, behave this way, we know the child is in charge and it is not pretty. The one who needs to

be in control – the adult part of ourselves – would have called upon more appropriate resources inside ourselves to deal with the issues at hand, which we can do if we can recognize our emotional child within and make deliberate efforts to develop more healthy responses – and, in other words, to grow ourselves up.

The first step towards moving in this direction is to acknowledge the existence of this character within us. The second step is to become aware of when this part of us gets triggered.

Grace and the tool box

Peter and Pauline want a framework for their counseling sessions. Yet, they need to learn about their habitual painful responses to each other. At the same time, they need to know how to begin to communicate effectively with each other now. To meet these immediate needs we need to find a tool that will help them get on the road of healthier functioning. This will not be as easy as it sounds.

Peter and Pauline need to stop blaming each other and take responsibility for their own feelings, thoughts and behaviors. This will eventually set them free from their previous painful interpersonal habits. They

Getting Unstuck

Arlene Van Hove



need to focus on their own responses to whatever is taking place. They need to wake up to the truth of what is happening with them and when it is happening. This is always very difficult for couples because both of them have been for a very long time oriented to the other rather than to themselves.

They need to take responsibility for their own responses. In other words, they need to ask themselves: what is happening here, what am I feeling, what is that about for me, how did I respond to this before, how do I want to respond now? Working through these questions will allow them to gain some self-awareness – a helpful tool because if they do not know what they are feeling or thinking they will react as before rather than choose a healthier response.

Most of all, however, they need to want to do the above work which can only happen if both of them extend the grace God gives them each day, to one another no matter how hard that may be. Giving this grace to one another allows them both to accept each other as flawed human beings – a good beginning for the new road ahead. More on the tool box next time.

Arlene Van Hove is a psychotherapist with Cascade Christian Counselling Association in Surrey, B.C.

Making couple time benefits the whole family



Lisa M. Petsche

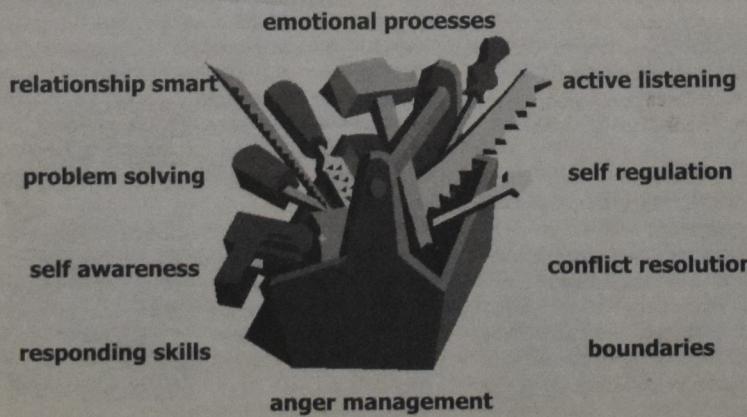
The early years of raising children are both physically and mentally demanding. It's easy for parents to get so caught up in meeting and anticipating their children's every need, in addition to fulfilling other obligations (employment, volunteering, household management, helping aging relatives), that they neglect the need for quality

time with their spouse.

However, in order to flourish, the marital relationship must be continually nurtured. This requires a conscious, ongoing investment of time and effort.

Chances are, though, you won't "find" couple time at this busy stage of your life; you have to carve it out, making it a priority. For instance, do you or your spouse de-

RELATIONSHIP TOOLBOX



Family/Reflections

vote time to individual leisure pursuits? If so, scale back and substitute couple time.

Consider establishing a weekly, biweekly or monthly "date," perhaps going out for dinner, attending a cultural or sporting event, or trying a new activity together. If you're on a tight budget, collect and use coupons for local restaurants and attractions, go out for dessert instead of a meal, take a long walk or go cycling, pack a picnic lunch or supper and go to a park, or drive somewhere that offers a great sunset view. Vary activities and the time of day to make dates even more fun, and take turns planning them.

Give preference to activities that allow you the opportunity to be alone and to communicate (remember how much time you spent talking — face to face and on the phone — when you were dating?). So if you like going to the movies, build in time for coffee or a walk afterwards. Once or twice a year, try to arrange an overnight "date," at home or away.

It's best if the babysitter is someone your children know well: a grandparent, aunt, uncle, teenage cousin, or a good friend of yours. Another option is to hire a teenager from your neighbourhood — someone whose family you know, or who has good references. If you don't know of anyone, ask around. (Make sure your kids are comfortable with the sitter, and vice versa, before you leave them alone.)

Or consider taking turns babysitting with another set of parents you know. Also check out the weekend preschool programs at area YM/YWCAs and recreation centers; they allow enough time for you and your spouse to go for coffee or a walk, or do some errands together (division of labor isn't permitted). Some Ys also offer Saturday night sleepovers, staffed by early childhood educators, for children 18 months and older.

If it's hard to arrange babysitting, or you feel your children are too young to be left with a sitter, plan home-based dates. Once the kids are settled in bed, order your favorite takeout food and enjoy a candlelit dinner in the dining room; have a picnic on the living room floor; cook a special meal together; cuddle up and watch a movie — perhaps one you enjoyed while courting; or play cards or board games, to give just a few

ideas. Turn off the phone so you (hopefully) aren't interrupted.

If you both work outside of home, arrange a lunch date, or jointly book off an afternoon and do something fun together until it's time to pick up the kids. If you can flex your work time, plan to go in later one day and have breakfast together after taking the kids to day care.

It's also important to find ways to build quality couple time into daily life, even if all you can manage for now is 15 minutes.

It can be as simple as habitually sitting down together to talk about your day once the kids are settled in bed, instead of automatically turning on the TV or computer, delving into your briefcase or dashing off to do household chores. Give each other your full attention, eliminating all distractions.

Get into the habit, too, of demonstrating affection on a daily basis, and expressing appreciation for the things your partner does for you and your family. Perform thoughtful gestures such as completing a household task your mate customarily handles or serving breakfast in bed. Revive courtship practices you once engaged in, like giving flowers or writing notes.

Rest assured that as your children grow, couple time will be easier to come by. However, you must lay the groundwork now. Without question it's a challenge, but well worth the effort, in terms of the connectedness and fulfillment the two of you will experience.

By fostering intimacy as a couple, you also create a nurturing home environment and set a positive relationship example for your children. In other words, the whole family benefits.

Lisa M. Petsche is a mother of three, clinical social worker and freelance writer.

"If only there were evil people somewhere insidiously committing evil deeds, and it were necessary only to separate them from the rest of us and destroy them. But the line dividing good and evil cuts through the heart of every human being."

-Alexander Solzhenitsyn

Know what you are reading?

If you have gotten the idea from reading my stuff that I'm a bit of a curmudgeon you just may have a point. Like every other old guy, I've stored up a long list of things that sort of bug me. Having the opportunity to write on a bit of a regular basis, I have a great opening for getting rid of some of those pesky things. So please bear with me as I work on trying to be a nice guy in spite of my "bugs."

Much editing . . . becomes rewriting

I am far from being alone in my long-time concern. It is one shared by a majority of people who "put pen to paper" and write for publication. It has to do with the well-nigh universal practice of editing everything that is submitted for public consumption in the print media, whether in the church or secular press. And though it may come as a bit of a shock to many of you, what you read is not necessarily what the author wrote, though his/her name is under it. In other words, everything that is published may have been changed, for better or for worse; whether the writing of Bob Greene in the Chicago Tribune, or of the great Wm. Faulkner, or of the author of your favorite book of meditations. It may almost all be written by the author, even 99%, but at times it could be rather far from it. It has happened that an author has some difficulty remembering that he wrote what he reads. The problem is exacerbated when the author is neither consulted nor informed of the changes in his writing, which is often the case.

I was made aware of this when Bob Greene wrote on the subject back in the '80s. He wasn't really complaining about it. He was simply making his readers aware so they might always read with insight into the situation. Through the years I have had a variety of experiences with editors, some very happy ones and others that I recall with degrees of negative import. I must say that I am usually very happy with Editor Harry, who rarely changes even a jot or a tittle of what I send in. Maybe he is too busy to really go after my stuff.

There are good reasons for having editors of course. Writers often make mistakes in spelling and grammar, produce long and involved sentences, repeat themselves and insert irrelevant phrases. Therefore editors must put things in order. But much editing goes beyond such necessary correction and becomes rewriting. As such it deletes material, makes substantive changes in concepts that may have been deliberatively expressed and intentionally nuanced, and at times reconstructs in such a way that even descriptive material no longer properly sets forth the facts. On rare occasions editors have even been known to introduce content quite foreign to the mind of the author. I could demonstrate all of the above from writings that have been published under my name. At that point "credits" are in order for the editors.

Seeking some kind of redress in such situations is a very frustrating matter in itself. It involves the author in a form of complaint that is tedious and time consuming and promises little in the way of remedy. After all, who of all the readers will look at a published "correction" and then go back to the original to see what was really involved? Given the fact that having your material published is in some sense a

real favor, one hesitates coming with complaints — you may not be asked to write again. Or you may be looked upon as arrogant or a nit-picker. Or you might even lose a friend. And some of us need all the friends we can keep. So you sit and stew about it.

Conviction and concern that comes from true inspiration

Another aspect of the problem should be mentioned. Every author worth his or her salt writes with the conviction and concern that comes from true inspiration, given by the Holy Spirit, I trust. This results in a certain personal style which needs to be respected and allowed to develop. Extensive rewriting may result in a technically superior product but in the long run will rob what we write of the power and fruit of inspiration. Editors who rewrite cannot preserve what has not been given to them; they will automatically impose their own style and will do so, I suspect, without the power of inspiration that fired the original author. It may be totally correct and also totally "blah." I believe it would be better to let our authors struggle to get their material into acceptable shape, reject what really can't stand the light of day and commission our editors to produce material in their own right.

Never struggled as hard

Now, maybe surprisingly so, I have real sympathy for editors. I was once one myself. It was back in the good old days in Southern Alberta in the 50's when we were trying to keep the congregations together through the printed page. The CRC churches of Lacombe-Red Deer and those to the south decided to put out a new publication we called Scope. It turned out that I was appointed the managing editor, with the responsibility of putting all the material together for the printer. That meant editing the contributions of a few newly-arrived Dutch ministers, like Remkes Kooistra and Maarten Vrieze. Needless to say their English was nigh unto atrocious and I was responsible for putting out a readable product every month. I have never struggled as hard with any problem as deciding whether to allow their pieces to stand in all their raw authenticity or to rewrite them. With a view to the readers, I got involved in extensive rewriting. Considering the time this consumed, Cobi advised that I let the authors stand on their own feet. I believe I always resorted to rewriting. And the authors never complained about it. As a matter of fact they rejoiced in it. But the problems of the editor were a major factor in the early demise of Scope — after four issues.



Ty Hofman is a Yankee-Canuck and retired minister of the Christian Reformed Church, living in Grand Rapids, Mich.

Opinion/News



Mainly on money

I read it in several reputable sources: first in the very establishment – based *Financial Times* (London, England), the newspaper of choice for Big Capital. This prestigious paper proclaimed Bush's money management: "Tax Lunacy." It's subtitle elaborates: "The US administration throws prudence out of the window."

A few weeks later the even more widely read *The Economist* suggested that, "unless painful steps are taken, America's finances will lead to a spectacular collapse."

The *Globe and Mail* and the cautious Bruce Little calls the Washington way "fiscal insanity." I learned from him that the USA differs from Canada also in its budget calculations. We in Canada keep our CPP, our Canada Pension Plan, separate from the general revenue. It is invested by an independent body free from political influence so that future generations can be reasonably assured that the money is always there. Not so in the USA. There this year's \$160 billion (US) Social Security surplus goes in the same big general revenue pot, which causes its deficit this year to be 'only' \$455 billion (US), while its real shortfall is \$615 billion (US) or 5.7 percent of Gross Domestic Product.

If this fiscal irresponsibility would occur in Argentina, Brazil or Canada, the world would hardly notice. But this is the country that spends one full quarter of the world resources, is responsible for 25 percent of whatever is produced or consumed on our planet, and its currency dominates the universe: oil, gold, the world's treasures are all calculated in American dollars. Whatever happens to this monetary unit, happens to us all.

The *Financial Times* editorial somberly concludes: "reason – for the income tax reduction – cuts no ice; economic theory is dismissed; and contrary evidence is ignored. But watching the world's economic superpower slowly destroy perhaps the world's most enviable fiscal position is something to behold."

Minnesota's leading news paper, the *StarTribune*, ran an editorial a few weeks ago, referring to this situation, shouting in bold letters: "OCEANS OF DEBT: The Future facing the United States."

You may remember Paul O'Neill, businessman turned Treasury Secretary, recently dismissed by President Bush for being too honest. He commissioned a study to dis-

cover whether future federal revenue matched future obligations. Earlier reports by the American Enterprise Institute had suggested that the United States faced a future of chronic deficits of staggering proportions. O'Neill's findings confirmed this: future federal spending would exceed future federal receipts by \$44.2 trillion, and this gap would grow to \$54 trillion by 2008, a mere 5 years from now. The main culprits: Medicare and Social Security, the benefits promised to the baby boomer generation.

Comments *The Economist*: "Like any private company teetering on the verge of insolvency, the American government must either find more revenue or cut spending."

I read last week that the Pentagon is doing just that: planning to reduce the 'danger pay' of soldiers in Iraq by \$150.00 per month. Not something these soldiers and their families will appreciate. It will only reduce the deficit by a pittance – \$300 million, a mere 0.5 percent of the estimated annual Iraq cost of \$60 billion (US) – while creating a tremendous amount of anger among the military, already over-extended, in mortal danger and suffering 50 C degree heat (120 F).

At any rate these figures boggle the mind. \$54 trillion equals four times the entire annual output of the US economy and is almost identical to the entire net worth of all the households in the United States combined. So basically, in a few years time the USA as a whole, is broke, bankrupt, unless all taxes are increased by two-thirds as of now. Instead, the wizards in Washington have decreased them by some \$350 billion.

No wonder Paul O'Neill left his post as Minister of Finance of the USA. No wonder the *Financial Times* called this tax cut "lunacy." No wonder the *New York Times* called it "Robin Hood in Reverse," meaning that instead of taking from the rich to give to the poor, this administration is taking from the poor to give to the rich. No wonder *The Economist* warns that if the true state of America's finances is not admitted, it faces a spectacular collapse.

The *StarTribune* editorial continues: "Neither [spending cuts nor extra taxes] are likely to happen, so the federal debt will continue to grow like out-of-control credit-card debt... The Bush administration is well aware of that. Indeed, this study was supposed to be included with the White House 2004 budget. It got left out."

No wonder that Paul Krugman – Princeton economist – has time and time again pointed out that this administration constantly deceives the public with half-truths and outright lies. James Carroll, writing in the *Boston Globe*, talks about a weather change in America, "a nation so adrift that it dares not look twice at its real condition."

It seems that there is only one courageous politician left in Washington – Senator Byrd, who said: "Eventually, like it always does, the truth will emerge. And when it does,

the house of cards, built of deceit, will fall."

House of cards

What's going on in this fair country? A few weeks ago I was in civilized Minneapolis-St. Paul, in a beautiful part of that city, where I can walk to bookstores, coffee shops, library, tennis courts, swimming pool, golf courses. It's hard to imagine that this upper middle-class neighborhood will be subject to immense financial pressures in a few years time.

Perhaps I am unduly pessimistic. I have a reputation there, I am told. However, if longtime senator Byrd is right and my sources reliable, and the US economy is a house of cards, its fall will spell the doom for the world's economy.

What can we do about it? Frankly I don't know. This is a matter beyond the scope of ordinary people. I am afraid that if the signs do become more pronounced, people, seeing no solution, will go wild and, as the Latin saying goes, *carpe diem*, enjoy it while it lasts. Or is that what we have been doing already?

Maybe my reputation as a doom-sayer is well-deserved, even though I call myself a realist. A realist looks a problem in the eye and then can cope with it more readily. It always amazes me how much abuse a body can take and still triumph. It's not that I want to minimize the dangers we face – we have painted ourselves into a tight corner – but, basically, believe it or not, I am an optimist, and my new up-ward looking picture is a good example of my up-beat nature.

It's summer. In my corner, the world looks good. Lately every evening a number of deer meander in the meadow in front of our home, delighting us with their calm, yet wary grace. The other day a wild turkey herded a dozen of her tiny young away from our long driveway into our recently planted pine trees. The humming birds are still active. They were back very early this year – late May – and, although birds seem not as numerous as other years, they still hop around our property as carefree as ever. Just last week a fox trotted past our house with a groundhog in this mouth, the very one I had to chase out of my veggie garden, which has been super good this year.

So I count my blessings, of which never being bored is one of them. Each day on my weather station, I keep track of a wide range of weather facts, such as barometer pressure, high and low for the day, wind strength and direction, rainfall and heating and cooling hours. What that instrument does not record is air pollution.

I read in the *Globe and Mail* a few days ago that air quality has declined by another 20 percent and that it is worse outside the city than inside, due to the winds. Is that the reason we see so much cancer all around us? What I fear – sorry, here comes my dark streak again – is not so much one single cata-

strophic occurrence, but a convergence of a series of mishaps, a combination of many little incidents suddenly consolidating. We've seen some of that this year: SARS, Mad Cow, electrical problems, forest fires, all signs of environmental strain.

Jared Diamond, professor of geography and environmental health sciences at the University of California in L.A., in an article in the June issue of *Harper's*, lists three ingrained habits with dangerous consequences for humanity:

(1) Taking from the environment whatever we want. Instead, we must keep the environment healthy to be able to continue to supply us with clean water, air, soil and sunlight.

(2) Putting faith in technology to fix our problems. Instead, we must realize that all our current problems are unanticipated harmful consequences of our existing technology.

(3) Calling environmentalists fear-mongers and extremists, whose predictions of impending disaster have been proved wrong before and will be proved wrong again. Instead, we must listen to them.

It is true that we, the rich of the world, are privileged. Such is not the case for billions, as we well know. Diathond tells how the Mayas in Mexico, who about 1,500 years ago also had a thriving economy, faced sudden collapse because of environmental problems. Their problem was that their rulers – politicians never change – had their attention focused on the short-term concerns of enriching themselves, waging wars, and extracting food from their peasants to support their activities.

Sounds familiar, doesn't it? Like most leaders throughout human history, the Maya kings and nobles did not have the foresight to focus on long-term problems. Why such lack of perspective? One reason is that it's difficult to recognize a slow trend. Then, even if danger is detected, those in power may not try to solve it, because pumping oil, catching fish, cutting down trees, benefits the rich – even though it's bad for us all. Especially in America mistrust in big government is deeply ingrained which makes it difficult to ensure that collective values, a clean environment, adequate pensions and universal healthcare, are provided for the less fortunate. Since the USA uses a quarter of the world's resources, they may spoil it for all of us.



Bert Hielema was delighted with the electrical outage: his solar panels and batteries kept him supplied with light, television, computer access, even power for the freezer.

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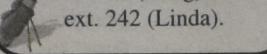
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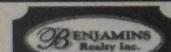
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Classifieds

Classified Rates	Birthdays	Anniversaries	Obituaries
DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION <i>Christian Courier</i> is published on alternate Mondays. Copy deadline for each issue is 9: a.m. Tuesday, thirteen days prior to publication date.	With thanks to God we are happy to celebrate the 90th birthday of Mrs. Maria Dam on Sept. 23, 2003 D.V. She has been blessed with good health, a zest for living and a sharp and active mind. She is loved by her five children: Joan & Jack Buwalda Leda & Cor VanderKruk Rene' & Anne Dam Christine & Andrew Schaafsma Mieke & Harold Groen, as well as 29 grandchildren and 39 great-grandchildren. She is the widow of Mr. William Dam and Co-founder of William Dam Seeds. "To God be the glory for the things He has done." Home address: Box 8400, Dundas ON L9H 6M1		"The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall lack nothing." May 22, 1939 — August 5, 2003 Friesland Newmarket The Netherlands Ontario KLAASKE VANDER KOOIJ (nee Miedema) Passed away peacefully and was received into the arms of the Good Shepherd.
PHOTOS There is a processing fee of \$25 for the inclusion of a photograph with a personal or family announcement. Photo space is not charged P.I., but we reserve the right to determine published photo size. Please note that we cannot use a faxed photo. We need either an original photo (which we will return) or a downloadable internet image.	PERSONAL ADS <i>Christian Courier</i> would be pleased to handle your personal ad in an efficient and discreet manner. The cost to set up a personal file under a unique file number is \$25. Ads requesting correspondence with this file are run at \$16 P.I. per insertion. All correspondence is immediately forwarded unopened.	 NEWLYWEDS & NEW PARENTS We offer a \$25 one-year subscription to couples whose wedding is announced in <i>Christian Courier</i> and to parents who announce a child's birth in our paper. If you want to take advantage of this offer, please let us know when placing your ad.	 SUBMITTING YOUR AD Mail: <i>Christian Courier</i> 1 Hiscott St. St. Catharines, ON L2R 1C7 fax: 905-682-8313 E-mail: see above
OTHER INFORMATION a) <i>Christian Courier</i> reserves the right to print classifieds using our usual format and editing style. b) Please provide us with clear copy. <i>Christian Courier</i> is not responsible for any errors due to hand written or phonetic in advertisements.	 Happy Birthday! Joan Zandbergen will celebrate her 90th birthday on Sept. 19, 2003 D.V. Thank you for your love to all your family Mom. May the Lord continue to bless you with good health to enjoy family and friends. With all our love from your children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren.	 JERRY AND FREDA VAN DYK (nee Span) give GOD thanks for 50 years of marriage Sept 23, 2003. They, with their children and grandchildren hope to celebrate with an Open House Saturday, Sept 27, 2003 D.V. at Maranatha CRC, 94 Elgin St. S, Cambridge Ont. from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. Home address: 855 Regent St, Cambridge ON N3H 2V4.	 Dear sister of: Robert (t) & Eva Miedema Sam (t) & Marjorie Miedema Donald & Eva Miedema Dirk & Grace Miedema Dear sister-in-law of: Rita & Chris (t) Bydevaate Sara & John Veenstra Peter & Leni Vander Kooij Corrie & Harry Langendoen Audrey & Harry Kruisselbrink Margaret & Piet Mostert John & Caroline Vander Kooij Chris & Lisa Vander Kooij A funeral service was held at the Holland Marsh Christian Reformed Church Friday, August 8, 2:00 p.m. Revs. Dirk Miedema & Ray Vander Kooij officiating.
 Personals Widow, late 60's, CRC, would like to meet a Christian gentleman to share future with. Please reply to: File No. 2740 1 Hiscott St St Catharines ON L2R 1C7			 Donations to the ALS Society of Ontario would be appreciated. Mailing Address: Harry Vander Kooij 19350 Dufferin St. RR 2 Newmarket ON L3Y 4V9
 Thank You Praise and thanksgiving to our Lord for the unforgettable day! We thank our children, family, friends and all who came out to celebrate our 50th Wedding Anniversary with us. Thank you all for the best wishes, gifts and the many cards we received.	 Oct 18 A DAY OF ENCOURAGEMENT and training for deacons, elders and all other interested church members at Hamilton District Christian High School in Ancaster. Theme: "Delight in Him!". Choose from 50 workshops and 15 "Service Sites". All sessions are open to everyone. Cost: \$50. Contact your deacons for a registration form, or contact Diaconal Ministries at (905)336-2920 or visit us at www.diaconalministries.com .	 Celebrating God's goodness and love 50 th Wedding Anniversary September 17, 2003 ROBERT AND MARY VANDER VENNEN Mark & Alice VanderVennen Robyn, Luke, Rachel Paul & Judy VanderVennen Jacqueline, Jason, Shane, Derek Kathryn VanderVennen One Massey Square, Suite 1910 Toronto, Ontario M4C 5L4 vennen@attglobal.net	 "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want." Psalm 23 On July 16, 2003 our Lord and Savior called home our dear husband, father, grandfather, and great-grandfather ROELOF DE JONG at the age of 87 years. Beloved husband of Anna (Jongsma). Dear father of: Japke (Ralph) Tibben Anne (Dean) Keyes Bill (Tina) De Jong Grandfather of 10 grandchildren and 4 great-grandchildren. Roelof was one of the founding members of Williamsburg Christian Reformed Church and Timothy Christian School. Correspondence address: RR #3 Williamsburg ON K0C 2H0
 For Rent Basement apartment available to Christian single or couple. Located close to Holland Marsh, Newmarket area (Hwy. 27, Hwy 9, Hwy. 400). Partially furnished. Satellite and kitchen appliances included. Please call 905-939-7363.	 A Dutch service will be held in the Ancaster Chr. Ref. Church Sept. 7 at 3 p.m. Rev J. Klomps preaching	 The TRANScona CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH will be celebrating their 50TH ANNIVERSARY October 10-14, 2003. For Banquet tickets or more details call Bev Steendam at 1-204-853-2150 or e-mail jsteenda@mts.net Visit our website www.mts.net/~vanoven	

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Events**Nov 7**

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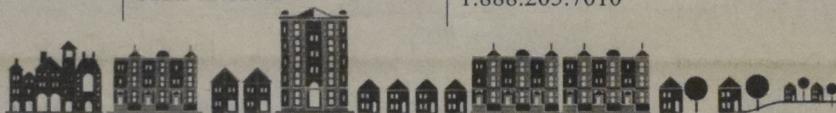
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Events/Advertising

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

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Sep 13 Back to God Hour benefit concert at St. George Anglican Church, 99 Woolwich St., **Guelph**, Ont. 7:30 p.m. MATTANIAH Chr. Male Choir. Info: 519-836-6229. See ad for more details.

Sep 17 Bethesda Home will host their Annual Charity **Golf** Tournament at Rockway Glen in **St. Catharines**. Includes lunch, dinner, 18 holes of golf, cart, prizes. Info: 905-684-6918 ext. 231 or 242

Sep 26 Wycliffe live dinner theatre production! A moving portrayal of how God is calling and preparing national Bible translators to fulfill the great commission. Free will offering. Held at Calvary Church, 89 Scott St. St. Catharines. Call Ena Putnam 905-682-6787 for reservation.

Oct 10-14 The **Transcona CRC** (Winnipeg, Manitoba) will be celebrating its **50th Anniversary** with praise, thanksgiving & fellowship. For info call: Bev Steendam at 204-853-2150 or jsteenda@mts.net

Oct 11,12 First CRC, **Guelph**, Ont. 50th anniversary. Celebrations include childrens programs, Social, Banquet. See September issue for more details or e-mail: crc-guelph@sentex.net

Oct 18 **Ingersoll CRC** 50th anniversary. Dinner program at 6 p.m. Columbo Hall, Beachville. For info & dinner tickets, call Jane Heerema at **519-485-1113**

Oct 18 **Netherlands Bazaar, Thornhill** Community Centre, 7755 Bayview Avenue, Thornhill. Market Place: Crafts, etc. 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Auction 7 p.m. - 10 p.m. Dutch food delicacies 10 a.m. - 9 p.m. Admission free. For information, call 905-477-1243

Oct 18 A **Day of Encouragement** and training for deacons, elders and all other interested church members at Hamilton District Christian High School in **Ancaster**. Theme: "Delight in Him!". Choose from 50 workshops and 15 "Service Sites". All sessions are open to everyone. Cost: \$50. Contact your deacons for a registration form, or contact Diaconal Ministries at (905)336-2920 or visit us at www.diaconalministries.com.

Oct 27 Heritage Day at Redeemer University College, Ancaster, Ont. Speaker: Dr. Bert Polman. Featuring: program of student music. More info in Sep 22 issue.

Nov 7 Christian Festival Concert under the direction of Leendert Kooij in ROY THOMSON HALL. \$30/\$22/ \$16 Call 416-636-9779. See ad Sep issues for more info

Nov 7 Concert in the Clinton Chr. Ref. Church at 7:30 p.m. Participants are Chris Teeuwsen, organist, The Blyth Festival Orchestra, the Men of Note, and the Sarnia Male Choir-Sursum Corda. Tickets are \$10; \$5 for children under 12.

Nov. 8 **Concert of Sacred Music by St. Thomas Cresendo Male Choir** 7:30 p.m. Centennial Road Standard Church, Centennial Road, North of **Brockville**. Free will offering. (613)923-2487

Nov 22 **Concert of Sacred Music by St. Thomas Cresendo Male Choir** 7:30 p.m. First Christian Reformed Church, 33 Shirley Ave., Barrie. Free will offering. (519)637-4357

Nov 29 **Concert of Sacred Music by St. Thomas Cresendo Male Choir** 7:30 p.m. Providence Presbyterian Church, 447 Second St., **Strathroy**. Free will offering. (519)637-4357

Dec 5, 6,7 **Bethel CRC of Lacombe, Alberta**, 50th anniversary - weekend of praise, thanksgiving and fellowship. All former and present members and friends are invited. For info, call: Eleanor Wildeboer at 403-782-2602 or e-mail wilelwildeboer@aol.com (See ad March 17 issue)

Dec 14 **Concert of Sacred Music by St. Thomas Cresendo Male Choir** 7:30 p.m. Knox Presbyterian Church, 55 Hincks St., **St. Thomas**. Free will offering for Christmas Care & Salvation Army (519) 637-4357



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Made possible in the Christian Reformed Church through a grant from Lilly Endowment Inc.

Saturday October 18, 2003, marks the
50th ANNIVERSARY of
THE INGERSOLL
CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH.

We plan to celebrate this blessed occasion with a dinner program on the evening of that date, beginning at six p.m., in the Columbo Hall, Beachville. Former members and friends are hereby most cordially invited to join us for the evening. For further information, reservation and dinner tickets please call Mrs. Jane Heerema at 519-485-1113

FIRST CRC OF GUELPH, ONTARIO

50th Anniversary

Sat. Oct 11/03

10 a.m. -12 noon Children's program

6 p.m. Social Hour

7 p.m. Banquet Variety Evening at Guelph Place

Sun. Oct. 12 10 a.m. Celebration Worship Service

For tickets/info contact **519-822-7720**

or e-mail: crc-guelph@sentex.net

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News

Six thousand demonstrate to protest against same-sex marriage



Six thousand Canadians gather on Parliament Hill to protest same-sex marriage

Angela Reitsma

Frustrated with the verbal and written debate about homosexual marriage? Feeling useless, like nothing you do will influence the government anyway? Are you tired of calling your MP and writing letters to the editor? If you answered 'yes' to any of these questions, then CASSM can help you.

On August 22, six thousand *Canadians Against Same-Sex Marriage* gathered on Parliament Hill to act on what they believe. Canadian Chinese Christians made up about half of the crowd, two thousand of them from Toronto alone. Freeman Tang, a parishioner from Montreal, said that they represented Pentecostal, Baptist, Presbyterian, Alliance and independent churches. Other organizations present were of Roman Catholic origin, also Anglican, Ukrainian Orthodox, the Metropolitan Bible Church, REAL Women of Canada, and the Islamic Community of Ottawa. I was part of a small CRC contingent wandering around the fringes, carrying a home-made sign duct-taped to a squash racquet and wondering if the civil servants would serve coffee.

Critical junction in history

After gathering on the Supreme Court lawn, we marched the short distance along Wellington Street to Parliament Hill. Politicians and clergy spoke to the crowd, many of them critical of the way the government has handled the same-sex marriage bill so far. The pastor of Western Baptist church of Ottawa, Rev. Oosterman, declared that "democracy in Canada is dying. The liberal government does not want to hear from you." Cheryl Gallant, of the Alliance party and one of the only MPs to attend the rally, agreed. She said that the liberals "have an anti-family agenda which they will use every means possible to push." The leader of the Canadian Chinese, Rev. How, said that "we stand at a political junction of our nation's history. Let our moral conscience speak out today against same-sex marriage."

Tim Dooling, organizer of the event, monitored the crowd to make sure that no signs or activities could be interpreted as derogatory toward homosexuals. Despite his efforts to label the meeting "pro-marriage," the *National Post* called it an "Anti-Gay March." There were other subjective by-

lines in the secular media. The front page of Saturday's *Ottawa Citizen* showed a religious man at the march who "recoiled in horror" when he realized the picture he was about to take included two lesbians.

Religious persecution?

Derek Rogusky, the vice-president of Focus on the Family, articulated what some Christians have already experienced and what protestors that day sensed. It was certainly an odd feeling to watch reporters from CBC and CFTO swarm around the handful of gay advocates on the Hill and only pay passing attention to six thousand Christians. Rogusky gave this a name: religious persecution – and he believes it will increase in the future. He explained that if Svend Robinson's Bill C250 is passed, then things like gathering on Parliament Hill to protest gay marriage may soon be illegal. It could also ban parts of the Bible (such as Leviticus) as hate literature.

Rev. Holman of Eganville, Ontario, gave an impassioned testimony about religious persecution. He called on clergy to revoke their preaching licenses, as he has done, to resist the implementation of same-sex marriage ceremonies. He believes that if we, as Christians, withdraw from an increasingly evil society, it will strengthen our faith. Although the Liberal government currently promises protection of all religious people (the choice whether or not to marry homosexuals), many evangelicals remain scepti-

cal. David MacDonald of Ottawa worries that charitable donation status will eventually be revoked for churches that do not perform gay marriages. This suggests why so many Canadian Chinese were present at the rally: perhaps they understand religious persecution better than the average Canadian, given the current situation in China, and are wary in a way the Reformed community is not.

All the speakers agreed that the Canadian government's redefinition of marriage will have huge implications for society. These changes, they suggest, will drastically affect the lives of Christians in ways we don't realize yet. Which makes it even more necessary, as citizens and people of faith, to speak up now for what we believe. If two thousand Christian Reformed had come from Toronto, we probably wouldn't have been as organized as the Canadian Chinese. They wore matching t-shirts, sat in neat



"Justice for He-She Wed or Marriage is Dead"

groups and then marched ten abreast, directing themselves with hand-held radios. But who knows what difference a few mobilized coffee *kletzes*, or determined Bible Study groups, could have had – and can still make?



Protestors march down Wellington Street from the Supreme Court to the Hill

News Digest

The industrial revolution in reverse

The average work week for North Americans has been edging upward for the last three decades. In Canada, as in the US, the 40-hour week is becoming a thing of the past for increasing numbers of workers. In 2001 one in four Canadians worked more than 50 hrs per week compared to one in ten a decade ago.

Employers claim that the boundary between office and home is becoming blurred so that many workers do personal business during office hours. Many employees, they suggest, put in extra hours voluntarily, eager for the extra income.

Labor leaders, however, say that people are working longer hours because of cutbacks. Fewer workers to do the same amount of work means longer hours. Some of the working poor have to hold down more than one job just to make ends meet.

The boom of the 1990s created great opportunities – for those willing to put family and social lives on the back burner. The industrial revolution with its labor-saving devices was supposed to provide ever more leisure. That trend has reversed.

A Take-back-your-time-day movement urges Americans to take the day off on Oct. 24, 2003. That day falls nine weeks before the end of the year – the additional time Americans work compared to their European counterparts.

So you're looking forward to early retirement? Don't count on it.

Many who have had a taste of it didn't like it and went back to work. Some are continuing to work every day well into their 70s and even into their 80s.

A recent television news segment focused on a manufacturer of precision medical equipment, whose entire workforce was made up of people well beyond retirement age. The head of the company praised their work ethic, reliability, and accuracy. It also didn't hurt that they were all on Medicare so he didn't have to pay for health benefits.

Experts are now saying that in the future the skills of those over 55 will be badly needed in the labor force. The economy will not be able to cope with the retirement of so many baby boomers all at the same time. It won't be able to afford losing their skills nor be able to afford supporting their lives of leisure.

However, the average age of retirement has dropped from 65 to 62 over the last 20 years, partly due to the ruthless downsizing of the early '90s. In fact, the percentage of those retiring before 55 doubled during that period. That trend has come to a halt.

The motto "Freedom 55," will soon be replaced by a new one: "Freedom 75."